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**TOP-5 CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT EMOTIONAL AND
BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS CAUSED BY CARTOONS**

*The mankind shall give the child the
best it has...*

The Declaration of Human Rights

Modern psychologists, teachers, and parents more frequently face the deviant behavior of children of different age: on the one hand, young people are characterized by stiff and underdeveloped speech; on the other hand, they demonstrate high aggressiveness and demonstrativeness. Such child acts abnormally: he/she is too shy to answer a simple question, but not afraid of making faces at adult strangers, crawling under the table, and showing obscene gestures. Models of disruptive behavior are quickly and willingly adopted by children, although they do not see anything like this at home and repeatedly hear from their parents about the rules of behavior. However, most of these children are (1) mentally normal and (2) live in well off families, where they have everything: toys, development games, and books. They attend various children's studios and have tutors come to their home. On the other hand, new generation has enough free time to spend watching television and playing computer games. In the 1970s, Albert Bandura, a famous American psychologist, outlined the basic principles of social learning in his work *Social Learning Theory*. According to his theory, children and adults acquire certain features, new emotional responses and behaviors by simulating the actions of the movie and TV characters [1]. Taking into consideration the effectiveness and prevalence of TV-modeling, the mass media play a crucial role in the shaping of behavior and social relations. It should be noted that new technologies and methods

of manipulation constitute the greatest threat for young viewers, because children of the 21st Century spend more time in front of the TV. This is confirmed by experiments and everyday practice.

This work generalizes the experience of the professors of the Department of Defectology and Psychological Correction of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University (I. Uzhchenko, I. Grigoriev, V. Kovalenko, A. Mukhin, N. Syeromaha), aimed at building the competence of the adults caring about the psychological comfort of children.

The purpose of this work is to describe the five most widespread emotional and behavioral disorders of children and adolescents and their origin under the influence of cartoons: the aggressive and demonstrative behavior, mental retardation and speech delay, gender identification disorder (G.I.D.), and deviant behavior patterns.

Despite the efforts of psychiatrists, psychologists, teachers, and the society in general, behavioral problems of children and adolescents remain persistent; a significant number of children act destructively and antisocially. Comprehensive psychological research on this problem in the Russian and Ukrainian psychology is described in a number of works (H. Andreeva, B. Harbuzov, O. Zakharov, V. Znakov, S. Yenikopolov, O. Kozachok, L. Colina, N. Lievitov, N. Maksimova, N. Markova, Ye. Milutina, S. Roschin, T. Rumiantseva, L. Semeniuk, Ye. Subbots'ky, I. Furmanov), including the study of the deviant behavior in adolescents (M. Alemaskin, S. Bielicheva, H. Minkovsky, I. Nevsky). Emotional and behavioral disorders were investigated in many psychological works of foreign scholars (A. Bandura, M. Braun, R. Walter, Z. Berkowits, A. Buss, K. Lorens, C. Richard, G. Kaufmann).

Aggressive behavior, which is considered unacceptable in the society, is the first and the most common phenomenon. However, the degree of acceptable aggression varies greatly in different cultures. For example, American Indian tribes such as Comanche and Apache fostered bellicosity in their children, while Hopi and Zuni, quite the contrary, appreciated peacefulness. It is aggressiveness that allows

many animals survive natural selection. In human relations, aggressiveness has positive and negative, healthy and unhealthy sides.

The term “aggression” comes from Latin *aggredi* meaning “to attack”. It is an action that violates physical or mental integrity of another person [2, p. 5]. In psychological and educational literature, the terms “aggressiveness” and “aggressive behavior” are used along with the concept of aggression. S. Yenikoplov interprets aggression as a personality trait, a purposeful destructive behavior. According to O. Ratinov and O. Sitkovs’ka, aggressiveness is the presence of destructive tendencies aimed at inflicting harm upon others.

R. Beron and D. Richardson, foreign researchers, define aggressive behavior as the behavior aimed at abusing or harming other living being that does not want such treatment.

According to R. Hinde, numerous expressions of aggressive behavior are divided into the following types: instrumental or specific aggression focused on obtaining a variety of objects or controlling situation; aggression driven by anger and directed at the object or situation; aggression as a defensive reaction; aggression connected with play and entertainment and triggered by competition.

Among the factors that provoke aggression in children are hereditary constitutional predisposition, residual organic features, microenvironment, character structure and educational system, age and individual psychological peculiarities, socio-economic and political organization of the society, including mass media, which is represented by various children's programs, movies, and cartoons [3, p. 6].

For example, children watch cartoons, the protagonists of which are aggressive: they try to hurt others, very often injure or kill other characters. The details of cruel, aggressive behavior are repeated and graphic. As a result, children may display violence, cruelty, and anger in real life.

Watching scenes of TV violence by children increases their aggressiveness and forms negative personality traits. For example, in the animated series *Pokémon*, the creatures called pokemons (literary „pocket monsters”) fight together, eager to destroy each other.

In accordance with the laws of the perception of a work of art, children identify themselves with protagonists. Identifying themselves with the creatures that successfully destroy each other, children learn aggressive behavior patterns. His/her mind develops a kind of aggressiveness “channel”, through which the child’s feelings flow.

Each person has a latent sadomasochistic complex, and many modern cartoons exploit it and make the child to experience pleasure from watching a cartoon hero causing pain to another one. It is skillfully stimulated by audio and video. Multiple repetitions of these scenes lead to fixing aggression by children and contribute to strengthening corresponding behavioral patterns.

One more behavioral disorder is demonstrativeness. Demonstrative behavior is a tendency to repress unpleasant facts and events, to lie and fantasize as a means of attracting attention. It is characterized by the lack of remorse, vanity, “escape into illness” if the need for recognition is not met. There are the following features of demonstrative behavior: eagerness to be in the spotlight, inflated self-esteem, boasting about one’s non-existent achievements, inability to cope with blows to the ego.

Children imitate demonstrative behavior patterns of cartoon characters. This is also a consequence of identification. At that, a child can be dispositionally shy, but in order to look like cartoon characters that behave demonstratively, he/she has to alter the nature. It is known that the behavioral patterns exhibited by appealing characters are very attractive for viewers, especially for children. And if disruptive behavior is not punished on the screen, there is a high probability that many children and teenagers will imitate it. A striking example of a destructive cartoon is modern and very popular among children and teenagers Russian animated series *Masha and the Bear*, in which demonstrative behavior is favored.

The protagonist of this cartoon is a cute little girl, whose appeal is in a total lack of authority. She shows demonstrative models of behavior, especially whims, defiance in dealing with others, manipulating. Owing to the characters of this cartoon, these behavioral models look funny. On the other hand, they affect children’s mind so

that they begin to imitate these behavioral patterns, as these series do not offer criticism or punishment. Constant repetition of such scenes causes a fixation of demonstrativeness in children and reinforces corresponding behavior.

Children who come to the educational institutions have different behavioral patterns, character structure, and cognitive development. Some of them learn easily, others need to take efforts to get the same amount of knowledge; however, with the help of adults, they master the educational material.

Among the causes of persistently low academic performance is a phenomenon known in children as the “syndrome of psychic infantilism”. Syndrome of psychic infantilism is an assembled of various clinical features group of different variants of mental underdevelopment, which are not characterized by general mental retardation, but include those personal and intellectual characteristics that make it difficult for children to timely and effectively master basic school knowledge [4, p. 74].

The syndrome manifests itself among the first-graders and elementary school pupils as a poor adjustment to the situation, expressed priority of playing over studying in school age, speech underdevelopment, inability to perform volitional actions and overcome obstacles, relative weakness of abstract and logical thinking, lack of cognitive initiative in learning, absence of school interests, undeveloped “student role”, and willingness to be in the company of younger children or those who defend them.

Syndrome of psychic infantilism is heterogeneous both in terms of its triggers and clinical implications. In some cases, prominent is slow emotional and volitional development, whereas cognitive impairment is not pronounced. In other cases, cognitive disorders prevail [5, 6].

Among the classifications of mental retardation, the classification by K. Lebedyn'ska is one of the most well known [5, p. 17]. It is based on the etiopathogenetic approach, which distinguishes the following main variants of mental retardation: of constitutional, organic brain, somatogenic, and psychogenic origin.

“Psychogenic” (“sociogenic”) infantilism is caused by socio-psychological factors, i.e., unfavorable social and psychological environment. Emotional

deprivation, monotonous social environment and contacts, hypo- and hyper-protection of parents, weak individual cognitive stimulation cause mental retardation in children. As a result, cognitive motivation is reduced, emotions are superficial, behavior is dependent, attitudes and relationships are characterized by infantilism. These children are neglected, their only friend and companion is television. Most often cartoons contain “educational” episodes, which, upon a closer view, appear to be destructive. An example is a demonstration of animals in the children's television series *Teletubbies*. In this TV show, animals are following each other monotonously: flamingo walks along with penguins, elephants, tigers, turtles, and frogs. Thus, the notion “animals” is not reinforced by a visual image; moreover, it is diffused by visual chaos.

Baby Einstein, or its Russian equivalent *Я все могу*, is quite the opposite example of the TV program intended for pre-school viewers. In this program, a general concept is formed for each group of animals: “animals that live in the jungle” accompanied by the video. Moreover, the animal that is being introduced is represented by the picture, photo, and video in the wild nature. In other words, generalization and concretization of the notion occur simultaneously; the notion is acquired in its diversity.

A. Wood and A. Davenport, who created *Teletubbies*, from the very beginning positioned the program as an educational product for children from six months to four years. Watching this TV program, children uncritically absorb the suggested behavioral patterns. Thus, when it is time for *Teletubbies* to go to bed, they start hiding, saying “No”. As a result of accepting this model, children can develop neurasthenia, insomnia. Another episode shows *Teletubbies*, who got hungry and decided to have lunch of Tubby Toasts, but forgot the order of pushing the buttons. As a result of this error, Tubby Toasts were flying around the room. This situation brings about laughter and happiness, forms the following behavioral pattern: you are allowed to make a mess and throw stuff – it will be funny.

Thus, young viewers every day learn new behavioral patterns, which are common in Teletubbyland. Many children will follow the clumsy gait, mechanized gestures, and exclamations of the characters.

Another type of emotional and behavioral disorders, triggered as a result of watching modern cartoons, is the disturbance of gender role behavior. Gender role behavior is the public display of gender-role identity in accordance with the norms of masculinity and femininity, accepted in the society [7, p. 124]. Since childhood, adults expect certain behavioral patterns from boys and girls in accordance with their gender, and children are praised if their behavior meets the norms. For example, a “real boy” never cries, even if he is hurt or offended, he should be able to protect himself and achieve the goal at any cost. Gender defines the way parents refer to the child; what toys and clothes are bought, how the hair is styled, as well as what games are played with the child and behavior is expected from him/her [9].

The following characteristics reflect gender role: personality traits, values, skills and abilities, interests and activities that are performed within family or professional roles [7, p. 132].

A 3-4 year old child is able to distinguish the gender of people consciously; however, they do it with the help of external features (clothing, hair length). At the age of 11-13 years, teenagers begin to adopt the behavioral patterns and life values of the people attractive for them [8, p. 402]. What in particular influences the formation of gender-role identity? Family is in the first place, peers who communicate with the child come second; cartoons and children's literature, which are the competitors of the first two since the child is three years of age, occupy the third place. Modern animated series differ from the Soviet cartoons, which praised kindness and in which “goodies” were pleasant-looking. Today, it is difficult for the child to tell a goodie from a baddie; that is why he/she identifies him/herself with a character chosen spontaneously. As a result, not only phrases, facial expressions, gestures are imitated, but even the identity develops under the influence of the character that was selected in such a manner. All of these deficiencies are, then, emerge in the behavior.

Thus, the broadcasting of negative, improper gender-role identity is represented by the absence of an attractive hero for the child. The animated series *Sesame Street* is a good example. It promotes deviant and unsuccessful behavior, the characters are ugly and disgusting. A child imitates not only the behavior, but also the facial expressions of the characters, their gestures and manners, while the faces of the *Sesame Street* monsters are obtuse and mean. When a child identifies him/herself with these characters, his/her inner identity correlates with the expression of their faces. And the child begins to behave in their manner. The series were designed for children of 4 years of age and younger – the period when the child adopts behavioral patterns, following the example [8, p. 398].

The second reason for the child's gender-role identity not to form correctly is the exposure to asexual creatures. Analysis of the cartoons showed that characters are not much different from each other, i.e., they are not characterized by masculine and feminine differentiation of external and internal features. As an instance, we can mention the cartoon characters of *Sesame Street*, *Teletubbies*, *Pokémon*, and others. In addition, these series broadcast the violation of the gender-role stereotype. For example, in one of the episodes of *Teletubbies*, Lala gives Tinki-Winky, who is a boy, her skirt to try on; he puts it on and dances, his behavior is not condemned by others, moreover, they laugh and applaud him. It is also inappropriate that *Teletubbies* do not consider the fact that male role is usually less flexible. In our culture, the lack of compliance with the male role causes more rage and ridicule than that with female role. Greeting kisses and hugs between boys are common in *Teletubbies*; they also often jump and touch each other with bellies. If a little boy demonstrates this with his friends on the street or in the kindergarten, adults will not favor this behavior.

One more negative side of gender-role stereotype violation is the opposite behavior of the characters: boys are given feminine traits (passivity, weakness), and girls have masculine ones (aggressiveness, ambitions, decisiveness). *Sailor Moon*, a famous and very popular among teenage girls animated series, is a direct evidence of this. Girls are the main heroes of this series; the boys are depicted as less attractive,

more important that they lack traditional masculine traits. “Men, as the accessories of girls’ beautiful life-style” – this is the motto of this series, which has a devastating impact on the underlying structures of teenage girls identity.

Thus, the formation of gender-role identity is quite complex and multifold process. Attention should be given to the information absorbed by the preschool and teenage children, as these periods are most important for gender-role identity formation.

Cartoons for children of virtually all ages contain striking examples of deviant behavior. “Deviant behavior” is an umbrella term for various violations of social norms that is used in foreign literature.

Deviant behavior is a behavior that deviates from generally accepted norms, but does not amount to antisocial and delinquent [10, p. 108]. It includes ordinary mischief of children, sometimes hooliganism that are common for a young age. Usually, they are caused by the situation and children's readiness to take such actions, rather than internal factors and mental disorders.

In all cases, deviant behavior is characterized by the increased emotional tension. It is always a step beyond normal feelings, emotions, and experience of children. Tension leads to the loss of the sense of reality, weaker self-control, and inability to evaluate one’s behavior correctly. Influenced by emotions, the child ceases to control his/her actions and is able to take reckless actions. The child may be rude; he/she can kick or break something. According to V. Kashchenko, the main purpose of deviant behavior is the attempt to get rid of internal tension.

I. Podlasy, a Russian researcher, proposes the following classification of deviant behavior manifestations. It includes disobedience, pranks, deed, children's negativism, stubbornness, whims, lawlessness, rudeness, and lack of discipline [11, p. 156].

Deviant behavior is caused by nonspecific (i.e., acquired) factors. Among the most wide-spread reasons for this type of behavior are increased everyday tension, which triggers persistent anxiety and distorts the child’s behavior, as well as educational factors, especially improper upbringing or lack thereof in the family

(V. Kashchenko, O. Kochetov, P. Lesgaft, D. Footer). Under such circumstances, children imitate negative, antisocial types of behavior found outside – in other people, mass media, cartoons, and TV shows.

The heroes of many cartoons demonstrate deviant behavior, which is not punished. Nobody disciplines the characters that violate generally accepted rules; nobody tells them that their actions are bad. This reinforces the idea of the acceptability of these forms of behavior in children; taboos are removed, the ideas of what are good and what are bad deeds are unsettled, as well as those of socially adequate and inadequate behavior.

Let us consider a typical American cartoon, *Woody Woodpecker and His Friends*. It features a man who works for his own and general welfare (a builder, public servant). And there is Woody woodpecker, a drone that wants to have fun all the time. As a result of a conflict between these characters, the workingman, who somehow got in the way of the bird's entertainment, is defeated. At that, Woody is represented as a real hero: he is quick-witted, resourceful, he makes his "enemies" look like idlers and fools. About 60% of episodes of the cartoon *Woody Woodpecker* contain the examples of the antisocial behavior of the protagonist.

Some cartoons may show dangerous forms of behavior, imitation of which in real life is impractical, pointless, and risky. Watching these acts to follow may reduce the child's sensitivity to risk and, consequently, to potential injuries.

Many cartoons contain scenes of irreverent attitude to people, animals, and plants. They demonstrate mockery of old age, weakness, and helplessness. The adults will be the first to experience "educational" effect of the systemic exposure of their children to these cartoons in the form of cynical statements, "bad" behavior, rudeness, and cruelty. The relations between the protagonists of the famous animated series *The Simpsons* are a striking example. Mother asks her son to do something for her, which he returns with obscenities. Elderly people, for example grandfather Simpson, are often mocked at, with keen sarcasm: a turtle steals his denture, but he is too slow to catch it, then his dear son slams the door right in front of his face... Norms of relations between parents and children are completely destroyed in this

animated series. The characters of this cartoon are not punished. On the contrary, they are having fun, are “cool”, and everything is viewed as “black humor”.

Professionals usually get to the described emotional and behavioral disorders in children and adolescents already as the expressions of fixed norms, ideals, and rules of conduct. Every disorder requires a detailed psychological study, analysis, and application of special methods of correction.

Among the general rules of correction are:

- 1) when working with a child, taking into account his/her individual characteristics;
- 2) encouragement and reinforcement of positive forms of behavior, as well as child's activity within peer group; and
- 3) search for the causes, motives of certain actions by the child as the basis for the selection of appropriate correctional and educational measures.

Thus, the analysis of some modern cartoons and emotional and behavioral disorders, caused by them, confirms that poor quality of cartoons from psycho-pedagogical point of view can influence destructively the child's psyche by impoverishing and infantilizing his/her cognitive and speech development. This statement is most relevant to the cartoons in which protagonists are aggressive, demonstrative, show substandard gender-role behavior, and whose deviant behavior is never punished.

Lack of life experience and unformed world outlook prevent children from being able to block off unnecessary information. Adults should remember that first cartoons stay in children's memory all their life, suggest models of behavior. Uncritical watching of low quality (from psychological point of view) animated series causes asocial behavior. Children's movies and cartoons may have negative impact on the mental development of children, formation of their identity by distorting the image of the true values: love, respect, friendship, care for people, the importance of labor.

Generalization of the data on the influence of cartoons on the children's mind does not cover all of the aspects of prevention and correction of children's

emotional and behavioral disorders. The interpretation of the given results allows us to state that the study of laws and individual details of mental and behavioral disorders, as well as the improvement of preventive and remedial techniques are one of the priorities of developmental psychology, social psychology, and child pathopsychology.

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Ужченко І. Ю., Григор'єва І. О. ТОП-5 емоційно-поведінкових розладів дітей і підлітків, спричинених переглядом мультфільмів

Статтю присвячено одній із актуальних проблем дитячої психології й патопсихології – емоційно-поведінковим розладам дітей і підлітків. Автори аналізують найбільш поширені в дитячій популяції розлади: агресивна й демонстративна поведінка, затримка психічного й мовленнєвого розвитку, порушення статевої ідентифікації й девіантні моделі поведінки. Відображено вплив перегляду психологічно небезпечних мультиплікаційних фільмів на емоційний стан дитини й поведінкові акти з метою психопрофілактичної роботи зі збереження психічного здоров'я дитини.

Ключові слова: патопсихологія, мультиплікаційні фільми, девіантна поведінка, порушення статевої ідентифікації.

Ужченко И. Ю., Григорьева И. А. ТОП-5 эмоционально-поведенческих расстройств детей и подростков, вызванных просмотром мультфильмов

Статья посвящена одной из актуальных проблем детской психологии и патопсихологии – эмоционально-поведенческим расстройствам детей и подростков. Авторами анализируются наиболее распространенные в детской популяции расстройства: агрессивное и демонстративное поведение, задержка

психического и речевого развития, нарушения полоролевой идентификации и девиантные модели поведения. Отображено влияние просмотра психологически опасных мультипликационных фильмов на эмоциональное состояние ребенка и поведенческие акты с целью психопрофилактической работы по сохранению психического здоровья детей.

Ключевые слова: патопсихология, мультипликационные фильмы, девиантное поведение, нарушение полоролевой идентификации.

Uzhchenko I. Yu., Hryhoryeva I. O. TOP-5 children and adolescent emotional and behavioral disorders caused by cartoons

The article is devoted to one of the pressing problems of developmental and pathopsychology – emotional and behavioral disorders of children and adolescents. The authors analyze the most common pediatric disorders: an aggressive and demonstrative behavior, mental and speech delays, gender identification disorders and deviant behavior patterns. The influence of watching psychologically dangerous cartoons on the child's mental state and behavior is analyzed for the purpose of preserving mental health of the child.

Key words: animated cartoons, deviant behavior, gender identification disorder.

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