

REVIEWS

ARTICOLE DE SINTEZĂ

Anxiety in institutionalized preadolescents. Manifestations, mitigation techniques (Note I)

Anxietatea la preadolescenții instituționalizați. Forme de manifestare, tehnici de diminuare (Nota I)

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Abstract

Anxiety is a concept with a pluridimensional interpretation, referring to fear, uncertainty, hesitation, unrest, agitation, tension in finding solutions, as a result of one's expectations and desire to assure one's security and welfare. The evolution of modern technologies, especially regarding the possibility to get information, stress, the other problems of contemporary societies in relation to morality, the increase of criminality, the appearance of ecological accidents etc., has influenced the different sides of the individual's personality, affectivity and behavior, amplifying psychological uncertainty. Consequently, the steps taken towards the study of the relations between anxiety, self-appreciation and the level of one's aspirations, the particular features of one's personality and the means and methods of diminishing one's anxiety are important in order to understand the essence of this phenomenon and subsequently the emotional and affective-volitional development peculiarities during pre-adolescence. It is well known that the relation between the psychological and the motor component is a biunivocal one, in the sense that any difficulty in either of them has a negative impact on the other and finally on the individual's global development. In order to highlight the role of adventure activities in fighting off and diminishing anxiety in contemporary preadolescents, we carried out an experimental investigation based on the application of an outdoor training program based on adventure activities in the form of outdoor games. Ludic behavior is characteristic of games and recreational activities and is sometimes found in the serious conduct of adults. It is indissolubly related to the different levels of the child's psychological development, and depends on the way in which different functions and mental operations are structured.

Key words: preadolescence, adventure, program, behavior, attitude, trust.

Rezumat

Anxietatea este un concept cu interpretare pluridimensională care se referă la teamă, nesiguranță, ezitare, neliniște, agitație, tensiune în găsirea soluțiilor, rezultat al așteptărilor și dorinței de asigurare a siguranței și a stării de bine. Evoluția tehnologiilor moderne, mai ales în ceea ce privește posibilitatea de obținere a informațiilor, stresul, celelalte probleme ale societăților contemporane, legate de moralitate, creșterea criminalității, apariția accidentelor ecologice etc. influențează diferit laturile personalității, afectivitatea și comportamentul individului, amplificând nesiguranța psihică. Prin urmare, pașii efectuați în direcția studierii legăturilor anxietății cu autoaprecierea și cu nivelul de aspirații, a metodelor și mijloacelor de diminuare a acesteia, a particularităților de personalitate sunt importanți, atât pentru înțelegerea esenței acestui fenomen, cât și ulterior a particularităților de dezvoltare emoțională și afectiv-volitivă la vârsta preadolescenței, știut fiind faptul că legătura dintre psihic și motric este una biunivocă, că orice dificultate apărută într-unul dintre cele două domenii are un impact negativ asupra celuilalt și, în final, asupra dezvoltării globale a individului. Pentru a evidenția rolul activităților de aventură în combaterea și diminuarea anxietății la preadolescenții contemporani am întreprins o investigație experimentală bazată pe aplicarea unui program de training outdoor, bazat pe activități de aventură sub formă de jocuri în aer liber. Comportamentul ludic este o conduită care se întâlnește în jocuri, în activitățile recreative, dar uneori pătrunde și în manifestările serioase ale adulților. Ea este indisolubil legată de nivelul dezvoltării psihice a copilului, depinzând de modul cum se structurează diferitele funcții și operații mentale.

Cuvinte cheie: preadolescenți, aventură, program, comportament, atitudine, încredere.

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Formulation of the problem

A primordial, intrinsic component of the human being, accompanying man as the shadow accompanies the traveler (Neagoe & Iordan, 2002), anxiety and its related topics have aroused the scientists' interest since the earliest stages of science. From an etymological viewpoint, the word *anxiety* comes from the Latin *anxietas*, meaning experience marked by agitation, uncertainty, fear and fright. Although the term is found in dictionaries as early as 1771, it was considered to be introduced in specialized language by S. Kierkegaard, who defined the notion as the creeps, the fright in the presence of something indefinite and undeterminable, unlike the feeling of fear, in which the object is concrete and individualized (Kierkegaard, 1998).

Beside the term anxiety, the specialized literature uses many other synonymous terms or semantically related terms such as: fear, fright, apprehension, unrest, panic and angst.

Anxiety is an affective disorder manifesting by a condition of unrest, fright, unmotivated concern, in the absence of any triggering causes. Fright is a negative condition or emotional process involving insecurity, unrest, alarm, agitation and a tendency to avoid an imminent or far-off danger (Popescu-Neveanu, 1978). In relation to the term of apprehension, the specialists explain that it is a state similar to low intensity anxiety (Sartre, 1997).

Unrest is a psychological affective condition involved in attitudes and motivations that dominate either the expectation of an unpleasant event and its consequences or the expectation of a pleasant moment combined with the fear that something might come up and hinder its natural development, or the occurrence of a very likely important event (Șchiopu, 1997).

Panic is an affective condition generated by the appearance of certain serious, unexpected events, affecting one's existence, comfort, adaptation, through the implications it might have (Crețu, 2009). As far as angst is concerned, it is defined as a sensation of profound discomfort, characterized by extreme unrest and irrational fear. Angst is an extreme unrest, an accentuated irrational fear, an intensified anxiety (Sillamy, 1996).

To conclude, all the conditions presented above have in common an unpleasant psychological-physiological experience, differing from one another through their different intensity and the circumstances in which they appear. Anxiety differs from fear and fright through the

fact that it has an irrational character, the complexity of emotions having no rational cause. Their temporal extension is different: fear and fright disappear as soon as the danger is overcome, while anxiety remains present even afterwards.

Although panic has a symptomatology similar to anxiety, it differs from it by the fact that in the case of the first, the level of its manifest signs is characterized by a high intensity (palpitations, sweating, trembling and a sensation of suffocation). At the same time, they differ by the way in which they appear: panic settles in all of a sudden, while anxiety, as a permanent condition, has a slow evolution in intensity. The latter has physiological, affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects, each of them with its own specific identification criteria, presented in Table I.

Anxiety theories

The psychological literature highlights the fact that anxiety is a complex psychological phenomenon. There are several theories aiming to explain this concept. We focused on several of these theories attempting to theoretically substantiate the topic of our study, namely:

a) The psychoanalytical theory. The term of anxiety was used in psychology for the first time in 1895, by Freud, acquiring different interpretations in time. So, in the conception of the above-mentioned author, it is presented as an emotional condition, adaptive in origin, induced on the one hand by a specific note of discomfort and on the other hand by the motor factor, which supposes an intensive consumption of psychological energy, which, becoming chronic, leads to the exhaustion in time of the specific management means related to this energy (Freud, 1959; Freud, 2004). The psychodynamic theory (Freud, 1959; Freud, 2004) was developed later, by adding to its structure all the basic biological and psychological processes; it was explained that the energy moves freely from the center of the body towards its extremities and then towards the external world, its return producing distortions and destructions at the level of normal sensitivity, sexual sensitivity being the most affected of all (Reich, 1983). From a different perspective (Adler, 1996), the inferiority complex turns the individual marked by it into a frustrated person, unable to solve even easy tasks, because he/she takes them for a way of evaluating his/her integrity, which causes an emotional reaction and a strong tension during this approach, the anxiety being induced by the need to

Table I
Spheres of operation and identification criteria for anxiety.

Sphere	Identification criteria
Physiological	There appears an emergency reaction, the human body getting ready to face a certain danger. So, it can be noticed that the heart beats faster and the blood pressure grows, the blood flow to the important muscle groups and the immunity and digestive functions being inhibited. On this background, there appear: trembling, agitation, perspiration, dizziness, palpitations, powerlessness, the feeling of cold and clammy hands, the sensation of dry mouth, increased respiration rate, alternation of hot flushes and cold shivers, malaise, nausea, the sensation of empty stomach.
Affective	One can notice psychological tension, fright, nervousness, unrest, irritability, a permanent condition of fear, restlessness, tension and dread.
Cognitive	One can notice a decrease of the ability to focus, mental exhaustion and tension, intellectual confusion, psychological discomfort.
Behavioral	Avoidance, generalized fatigue, hyperventilation, agitated verbal expression, rubbing and agitation of the hands, patting the surrounding objects with one's fingers, disorganized activity, low performance, tendency to overcome the discomfort condition using defensive mechanisms, insomnia.

regain one's lost social sense.

b) The neo-Freudian theory. The supporters of neo-Freudianism have continued to approach the issue of anxiety from the perspective of their own conceptions. The use of the term anxiety is synonymous to that of the term fright, which suggests a superposition or a belonging of these two terms to the same lexical family, as they are both considered to express emotional experiences and reactions closely connected to a certain hidden and subjective danger highlighted by trembling, sweating, violent palpitations, which can be so strong that an instantaneous and intense fright can even lead to death (Horney, 1995; Horney, 1998). Drawing close to the above conception, Sullivan (1953) considers that anxiety occurs when biological needs are not met, and is substantiated in the tensioning of the whole body and the intensification of the activity of the central nervous system, being encountered throughout one's life, not just like a personality feature, but rather as a determining factor in the development of one's personality.

c) The behavioral theory. The supporters of this theory state that anxiety and fear are related phenomena, being emotional reactions that appear based on the conditional reflex triggered by specific environmental factors, or as an imitation of one's parents' anxious reactions, the negative emotions being the result of the destruction of dynamic stereotypes (Watson, 1919; Tolman, 1938).

d) The gestalt psychology theory. From this perspective, anxiety is presented, on the one hand, as a result of an unsolved task, each experience remaining incomplete until it is completed, and on the other hand, anxiety is defined according to the principle "here and now" and any return to the lived events is in itself an attack against this condition.

e) The cognitive and the humanist theory. Cognitive psychology and humanist psychology appreciate that anxiety is the result of the living of a new experience which goes against the individual's knowledge or representations, consequently becoming a threat (Rogers, 2008; May, 1996). These two theories are important as they are superior to the psychoanalytical theory and to the learning theory, explaining anxiety through the introduction of the cognitive pattern model, which supposes that the individual manifesting anxiety tends to overestimate the danger inherent to a certain situation and at the same time to underestimate his ability and capability to face the physical or psychological threat he/she perceives. We can notice that these orientations do not contradict each other but become complementary, each having as a main goal the discovery and promotion of a way to explain anxiety as effectively as possible.

f) The contemporary psychological literature, especially Western literature, provides other perspectives on anxiety as well. It is compared to the shadow of intelligence, and considered to reflect an individual's capability to adapt and plan his/her future (Liddell, 1964). R. Cattell supposes that each of us goes through anxiety as a normal condition during threatening situations, yet there are chronically anxious personalities, for which the above-mentioned condition acquires a permanent aspect, having all the chances to become pathological (Cattell, 1966).

From the perspective of personality psychology,

the research on anxiety becomes necessary as it marks the value of the personality traits, the reactions to stress and the anxious conditions. Wolpe talks about anxiety as an anatomical answer matrix to the administration of a noxious stimulus (Wolpe, 1958); Barlow sees it as a fragmented cognitive-affective process, in which the person can neither predict, nor control the potentially negative or traumatic life events affecting him/her (Barlow & Craske, 2007); Ausubel and Robinson present anxiety as an affective answer or as a tendency to respond to any present or anticipated situation perceived as a potential threat to one's self-esteem by fear (Ausubel & Robinson, 1981).

The creator of the *State-Trait Anxiety Inventory*, Spielberger distinguishes between state-anxiety and trait-anxiety, relying on his own psychometric theory and approach, according to which the first is a transient answer to a stressful situation, an answer that involves sensations of tension, fear and different physiological changes, while the second represents a stable personality feature predisposing the person to the condition of anxiety when under stress (Spielberger, 1985; Spielberger, 1971; Spielberger & Rickman, 1991; Spielberger et al., 1995; Spielberger et al., 1991).

Similar approaches can be found in Doron & Parot (2006), state-anxiety being described as an emotional experience generated by the anticipation of a diffuse, difficult to predict and control danger which turns into fear in the presence of a well-identified danger, being accompanied by physiological and hormonal changes characteristic of high activation states, being often associated with preservation-retreat or avoidance behaviors. The same authors state that trait-anxiety represents an individual, apparently inborn feature, substantiated by the predisposition to feel a state of fear in the presence of certain stimuli that, for other individuals, are much less or not at all anxiogenic, and to develop frights conditioned by the presence of certain stimuli that are not anxiogenic by themselves (Doron & Parot, 2006). Concerning the same aspects, in his studies, R. Martens highlights that state-anxiety is the concrete or usual emotional level, characterized by a feeling of apprehension and tension, associated to the activation of the organism, whose negative effects are reflected in one's behavior, while trait-anxiety is the predisposition to perceive certain stimuli from the surrounding environment as being threatening or not and to answer them by different levels of state-anxiety (Martens et al., 1990).

In his turn, Wilks underlines the fact that anxiety is one of the most elementary emotional experiences, being closely connected to success and settling in when we approach and explore new domains, the changes and new knowledge being the main unknown factors waiting for us; in such cases, normality oscillates between fear and enthusiasm (Wilks, 2003). Pieron states that anxiety is "uneasiness, at the same time psychological and physical, characterized by diffuse fear and a feeling of insecurity and imminent disaster. The denomination of angst is rather reserved for the physical sensations accompanying anxiety (thoracic constriction, vascular and motor disorders). In practice, the two terms are synonymous" (Pieron, 2001).

Manifest anxiety factors

From the perspective of the research carried out and of the psychological literature, we can determine certain categories of factors influencing the manifestation of anxiety.

In a first category, we can find the biological ones, in the sense that certain genetic predispositions, such as certain parental sensitivities, can be passed on to children. Quite often, this does not agree with reality, especially when certain social behaviors are considered. It is well known that the age to which we are referring is characterized by morphological, functional and biological changes, which determine in turn a certain psychological discomfort, expressed by unrest, uncertainty, agitation, lack of attention, etc.

A second category refers to the socio-affective, cultural and educational factors specific to the social groups the preadolescent is going to be part of, an important role from this perspective being played by the family, as an essential element in the formation of the individual's personality. In its turn, school with all the relations it brings among the actors of the educational approach - horizontal and vertical - can lead to an amplification of the preadolescents' anxiety.

Manifest anxiety levels

Concerning manifest anxiety levels, the psychological literature highlights several viewpoints. The American psychologists Spence and Taylor, authors of the first psychometric test in this sense, namely Taylor's manifest anxiety scale, state that there are three manifest anxiety levels:

a) low - it indicates either "mental health" or the absence of a stressful provocation. A low manifest anxiety can be considered a normal and optimal phenomenon. Anxiety is necessary, acting as an impulse supporting the activity.

b) moderate - it represents the entrance to the state-anxiety area. It is characterized by an unpleasant psychological state of worries and uncertainty felt by the individual. A moderate anxiety level is associated with certain physiological manifestations. It has been evidenced that people with a moderate anxiety level tend to hide this condition.

c) high - it is a psychological reaction to a highly anxiogenic situation. A high anxiety level can result in a diminution of one's ability to coordinate one's muscles, energetic exhaustion and rapid setting in of fatigue, the disturbance of one's ability to focus leading to the limitation of adaptive behavior, the individual becoming unable to achieve the tasks proposed. A high anxiety level hinders the achievement of high performances (Reich, 1983).

As far as the types of anxiety are concerned, we mention that the literature highlights a few anxiety classification criteria, which we present in Table II.

Techniques for fighting off and diminishing anxiety

The aim of therapy is self-acceptance and to free oneself from the tensions and blockages written down in the body's memory. From a physical perspective, it improves one's blood flow, coordination and muscle tone. From a mental and emotional perspective, this therapy increases the preadolescents' self-esteem, stimulates their intellectual skills and creativity and allows them to express certain emotions that are difficult to convey in words (anger, frustration, isolation, etc.).

Adventure therapy aims to change the dysfunctional behavioral patterns of the clients with sometimes serious problems who require specialized or an alternative type of treatment. Within this therapy, the people involved learn new strategies to cope with their personal problems and to transfer their habits formed and acquired during their daily activities.

Ludotherapy or playtherapy, performed with passion and awareness, freedom and fantasy, gives amazing results, as it represents an optimization, support and recovery process for the preadolescent's extremely diverse potential. Psychological analyses show that ludic activities are characterized by spontaneity, abstractness, freedom, which is the main element of the children's psychological development, in their effort and training for social integration, and a pleasant means of relaxation and recreation for young people and adults (Jacobson, 1943).

Expressing oneself through movement is a psychotherapeutic method trying to recreate the first stimulating environment through the involvement of the child in movement activities. The purpose of movement therapy is to help preadolescents know and accept their body and control their movements. The work methods rely on usual movements and on the children's desire to interact with their peers and adults.

It is possible to update and modernize the extracurricular educational programs by assuring the compatibility of the content of the activities proposed and the contemporary expectations, the need to move and the desire to take risks (Beck et al., 2005). From this perspective, the above-mentioned expectations can be materialized through the introduction in the leisure school programs of certain adventure activities.

Outdoor training programs rely on problem-solving activities, which are interactive exercises, and involve the solving of collective tasks. Outdoor training, through its content, has the goal of mutual knowledge and also

Table II
Anxiety classification criteria and types of anxiety.

Criteria	Types of anxiety
The danger grasped and perceived by the individual	Real, neurotic and conscientious anxiety (Reich, 1983); anxiety as a direct result of self-restraint and as a result of external danger (Pehoiu, 2004).
Way of manifestation of anxiety	State-anxiety and trait-anxiety (Freud, 2010; Horney, 1998).
Context in which anxiety is manifested	School anxiety, self-esteem anxiety, social anxiety, interpersonal anxiety (Cattel, 1996; Spielberger & Rickman, 1991)

complex projects, which involve strategic thinking and adequate resource and time management.

In the history of their evolution, humans have often acted in small groups (10-20 individuals) to hunt, to cultivate the land or to learn different artisan skills. So, people have interacted from the perspective of verbal and non-verbal communication, of the experience of direct and physical learning, taking over *savoir-faire* (knowhow) from their fellows (Boboc et al., 2002).

The studies carried out (Chiriță, 1994) bring to light the fact that outdoor education, through its specific activities, relies on five criteria that also ensure the status of such activities: risk, unique consequences, energy consumption, physical and psychological effort, motivation to participate, uncertain results.

Education for adventure is, in the contemporary context, the preferred education of most schools all over the world, as it best answers our educational and adaptive expectations, including a variety of techniques and concepts based on lived experiences for a guided involvement of students, which makes them feel accepted and secure while increasing their risk-taking skills, which they need in order to learn and develop their personality (O'Connell, 2002).

Conclusions

1. Anxiety represents an acute problem of the times we live in and a psychological entity that can be described as a vague affective feeling of unrest, heaviness, tension, unmotivated worries, without any precise object or objective factors determining it, causing psychological discomfort but which, at a low level, is necessary because it acts as a motivating factor for action. Beyond this level, when anxiety exceeds a certain intensity and duration, it can mark a person, affecting his/her daily life, either by the fact that it imposes certain restrictions, or by totally darkening it.

2. Anxiety varies with gender, being encountered more often among boys than among girls. The manifest anxiety picture in boys and girls has distinctive notes: boys undergo a decrease in anxiety during preadolescence, while the girls' anxiety grows during the same period.

3. The etiology of school anxiety comprises a whole array of dynamic, mutually connected factors: experiencing social stress, frustration coming from the need to attain success, fear of self-assessment situations, fear of knowledge assessment situations, fear of not corresponding to the expectations of those around us, poor physiological resistance to stress and problems and fears in the relations with the teachers.

4. Anxiety and especially school anxiety can be diminished and improved through the implementation of outdoor physical training programs with psychological components that will have a positive influence on the development, optimization and support of the preadolescent's affective side, helping him/her acquire emotional and personal self-regulation skills, eliminate his/her inhibitions and develop the crucial elements of his/her self-conscience. An outdoor education will contribute to the socialization of the individual, to the knowledge and improvement of his/her psychological qualities, to the development of his/her personality, to the improvement

of his/her physical condition and to the knowledge and protection of the environment.

Conflicts of interests

Nothing to declare.

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