

# PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

## AGE DYNAMICS OF EMPATHY DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE

**Martynova Y.**

*Pirogov National Medical University, Vinnitsia (Ukraine)  
PhD in Medical Sciences, assistant professor of the Department of Medical Psychology and Psychiatry with  
the course of postgraduate education, Vinnytsia*

**Rudenko H.**

*Pirogov National Medical University, Vinnitsia (Ukraine)  
Assistant of the Department of Medical Psychology and Psychiatry  
with the course of postgraduate education, Vinnytsia*

**Matsko N.**

*Pirogov National Medical University, Vinnitsia (Ukraine)  
Assistant of the Department of Medical Psychology and Psychiatry  
with the course of postgraduate education, Vinnytsia*

**Ilnytskyi H.**

*Pirogov National Medical University, Vinnitsia (Ukraine)  
Assistant of the Department of Medical Psychology and Psychiatry  
with the course of postgraduate education, Vinnytsia*

DOI: [10.24412/3162-2364-2021-76-2-62-65](https://doi.org/10.24412/3162-2364-2021-76-2-62-65)

### ABSTRACT

The article considers the main manifestations of empathy in school and early student years. Levels of empathy in adolescence and adolescence are studied. Psychological features of empathy in adolescence are revealed.

**Keywords:** development of empathy, adolescence, adolescence, schoolchildren, students, manifestations of empathy.

**Formulation of the problem.** Empathy is a potential psychological motivator for helping others in distress. Empathy can be defined as the ability to feel or imagine another person's emotional experience. The ability to empathize is an important part of social and emotional development, affecting an individual's behavior toward others and the quality of social relationships [2].

Empathy is essential for motivating prosocial behavior toward others, including complying with social rules and engaging in altruistic behavior. Empathy also facilitates the development of social competence and enhances the quality of meaningful relationships. Empathy can be both an emotional and a cognitive experience. The ability to empathize begins at an early age, with infants as young as 18 hours showing some responsiveness to other infants' distress. During the second year of life, toddlers responses to others' distress typically transform from an overwhelming personal distress reaction to a more other oriented empathic reaction. At the same time, toddlers become capable of rather sophisticated helping behaviors. As children reach the preschool years, significant developments occur in cognitive empathy, or theory of mind abilities. There is evidence to suggest that these early dispositions toward empathy and prosocial behavior may be consistent and stable over time [2].

The basic position in the study of the dynamics of the ontogenesis of empathy in childhood is the idea of LS Vygotsky about the social situation of development - the idea of interindividual formation of higher mental functions. An adult for a child is not just a condition of personal development, but one of the direct participants in this process, its subject. Deep personal relationships are established between an adult and a child, within

which the personal development and formation of each of the subjects of interaction takes place.

Empathy is a necessary attribute of human interaction and communication. Therefore, it is advisable to study it, taking into account the peculiarities of the development of the individual's relationship with the environment. Since empathy is an emotional-cognitive phenomenon, its ontogenesis must be considered in conjunction, respectively, with the development of emotions, cognitions and the nature of interpersonal interactions of individuals.

The development of empathy is a process of forming ethical motives that act involuntarily in favor of another. With the help of empathy, the child is involved in the world of other people's experiences, an idea of the value of another is formed, and the need for the well-being of other people develops and is consolidated. As the child's mental development and the structuring of his personality, empathy becomes a source of ethical development.

In adolescence, gender differences in relation to different objects of empathy begin to appear for the first time. Adolescent girls generally show a greater degree of compassion for animals than boys. This fact can be considered the result of earlier assimilation of moral norms by girls, as well as greater orientation of girls to communication, their desire to have recognition in interpersonal relationships, while boys are more focused on subject achievements.

### Analysis of recent research and publications.

The known results of research in the field of age psychology make it possible to study empathy in adolescence, to determine the mechanisms of its occurrence [1,2,3]. As a rule, the emergence of the ability to empathize and empathize is attributed to early or preschool

age, as an element of self-actualization of the individual [4].

To study empathy, we used the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES). This questionnaire was developed by Albert Mehrabian and modified by N. Epstein. From A. Megrabian's point of view, emotional empathy is the ability to empathize with another person, to feel what another feels, to experience the same emotional states, to identify with him. Studies have shown that emotional empathy is related to the general state of human health, his social adaptability and reflects the level of development of skills of interaction with people.

The method "Scale of emotional response" allows you to analyze the general empathic tendencies of the subject, its parameters such as the level of expression of the ability to emotionally respond to the experience of another and the degree of conformity / mismatch of the sign of experiences of the object and subject of empathy. The objects of empathy are social situations and people whom the subject could empathize with in everyday life.

The questionnaire consists of 25 closed-type judgments - both direct and reverse. The subject must assess the degree of his / her agreement / disagreement with each of them. The scale of answers (from "completely agree" to "completely disagree") makes it possible to express nuances of attitude to each communication situation.

There are the following levels of expression of the individual's ability to respond emotionally to other people's experiences (empathy):

82-90 points - a very high level;

63-81 points - high level;

37-62 points - normal level;

36-12 points - low level;

11 points or less - a very low level.

High rates of empathy are inversely related to aggression and propensity for violence; highly correlated with flexibility, willingness to forgive others (but not yourself), willingness to perform routine work.

People with high scores on the emotional response scale compared to those who have low scores more often:

- respond to emotional stimuli by changing skin conduction and heart rate;
- more emotional, cry more often;

- usually had parents who spent a lot of time with them, clearly expressed their emotions and talked about their feelings;

- show altruism in real actions, tend to provide people with active assistance;

- demonstrate affiliative behavior (which helps to maintain and strengthen friendly relations);

- less aggressive;

- assess positive social traits as important;

- more focused on moral judgments.

The ability to empathize with other people is a valuable quality, but its hypertrophy can lead to emotional dependence on other people, painful vulnerability, which complicates effective socialization and can even lead to various psychosomatic diseases.

People with an average (normal) level of empathy in interpersonal relationships are more likely to judge others by their actions than to trust their personal impressions. As a rule, they have good control over their own emotional manifestations.

People with a low level of empathy in interpersonal relationships have difficulty establishing contact with people, feel uncomfortable in a large company, do not understand emotional manifestations and actions, often do not find understanding with others. They are much more productive in individual work than in group work, prone to rational decisions, value others more for business qualities and a clear mind than for sensitivity.

The choice of ineffective behavioral strategies may be the result of personal characteristics or evidence of ignorance of active forms of participation in other people's lives. To develop empathic abilities you need to improve communication skills, especially the ability to listen to another, to paraphrase, reflect and reflect emotions. Very useful assertiveness trainings, "feelings gymnastics".

**Purpose of the article.** The purpose of this article is to investigate the age dynamics of empathy in adolescence. The subjects were 140 students of 5-11 classes of secondary school №32 in Vinnytsia and 50 first and second year students of Pirogov National Medical University.

**Presentation of the main material.** According to the results of this method (Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale – BEES), the following results were obtained (Figure 1).

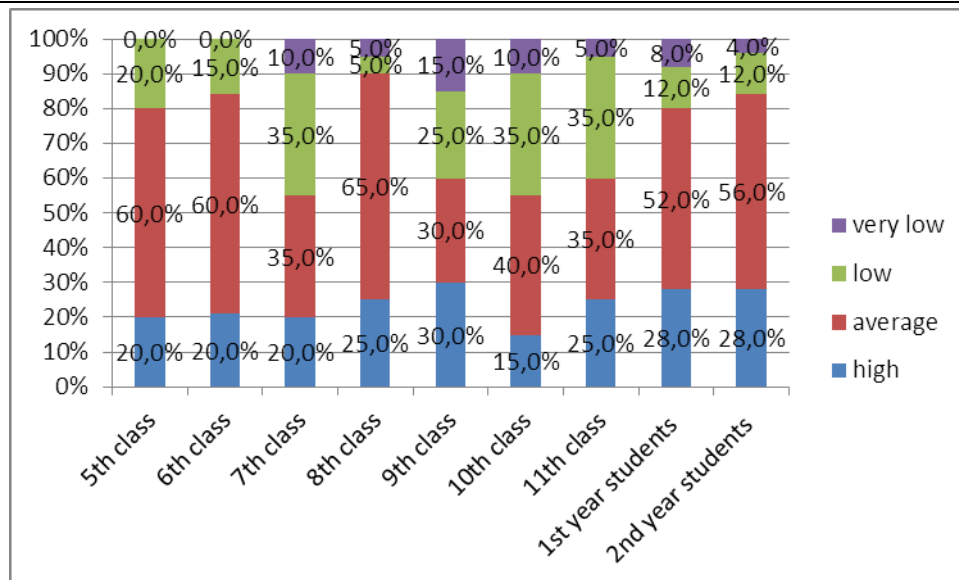


Fig.1. Percentage representation of empathy levels in adolescence

The analysis of indicators of empathy development in pubertal and postpubertal periods revealed some of its age features and regularities. It was noted above that the dynamics of empathy in adolescence is influenced by the general features of mental and personal development of this period.

Thus, fifth-graders and sixth-graders showed a general positive orientation towards another person. Most of them have an average level of empathy. They are not prone to aggression. A very small number of students have low empathy.

A completely different picture is observed in seventh-graders. It seems that the peculiarities of empathy reflect the crisis of adolescence and individualistic accentuation, the peak of which falls in the middle of puberty. Adolescents show individualistic accentuation in the focus of activity on the satisfaction of their own needs, on personal self-affirmation. Society and other people are interested in them indirectly, through the prism of their own interests.

Afterwards, there is a tendency to increase the number of adolescents who have a medium and high level of empathy. Especially significant positive changes are observed in the 8th class.

Ninth-classes somewhat disrupt the overall positive dynamics of empathy. It seems that on the border between puberty, youthful maximalism is most pronounced, which has led to the greatest differentiation of levels of empathy in schoolchildren. Thus, the proportions of highly empathetic ninth-class and those with very low empathy are the highest compared to students in all other classes of adolescence and adolescence.

At the beginning of early adolescence, empathy again decreases almost to the level of previous years.

Obviously, a large number of ninth-graders who show extreme polar empathy, as well as a sharp decline in high levels of empathy in tenth-graders are associated with the intensification of qualitative restructuring at this age of self-awareness and moral consciousness, the search for ego-identity, lifestyle and his sense.

A completely different picture of the age dynamics of empathy is observed in early adolescence compared to adolescence. After 15-16 years there is a smooth positive dynamics in the development of empathy. Every year the number of people with high and medium level of empathy develops, and the number of low-empathy boys and girls decreases. Such a stable and smooth dynamics of empathy during the period of early adolescence, obviously, represents the integration processes in the formation of empathy as a personal quality.

During adolescence, there is a sharp differentiation of the significance of the objects of empathy. The most significant empathic objects are single peers-friends and reference groups, to which higher levels, respectively, of monosubjective and group-centric empathic attitudes develop. This period is sensitive to the development of these attitudes. There is an uneven, discrete development of empathy in adolescents of different ages.

In early adolescence and early adulthood we have a smooth positive dynamics of empathy, which represents the integration processes in the formation of empathy as a personal quality.

During adolescence, the readiness to manifest transfinite empathy, which is a psychological neoplasm of this period. The high level of development of self-consciousness, semantic sphere, search for ego-identity, meaning of life, experience of love in adolescence determine the development of the highest, spiritual level of empathy, which is manifested in transcendent empathic attitudes.

**Conclusions and offers.** Empathy is a systemic multidimensional formation that belongs to the meta-system "man - world". It has structural (levels of reflection of the empathogenic situation and the corresponding types of empathy), dynamic (mechanisms of empathy development), functional (empathic attitudes and their types) and chronological (age) characteristics.

The analysis of indicators of empathy development in pubertal and postpubertal periods revealed some of its age features and regularities. The dynamics

of empathy in adolescence is influenced by the general features of mental and personal development of this period.

The development of empathy of the individual is directly related to the psychological features of the course and the leading activities of each of the age periods.

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