

Socio-psychological support in the educational process of children resettled from the warzone in Ukraine

Sostegno sociale e psicologico nel processo educativo dei bambini reinsediati dalla zona di guerra in Ucraina

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Abstract

The article examines the peculiarities of socio-psychological support in the educational process of children resettled from the war zone in Ukraine. The purpose of the article is to diagnose the peculiarities of the development of adaptive potential of children resettled from the war zone as one of the main stages of social and psychological support in the educational process of this category of children. Based on the results of diagnostics, it was established that the levels of development of adaptive potential of most children resettled from the war zone are within the normal range. Most difficulties faced by students resettled from the war zone are related to their assimilation of educational material, which, in turn, is caused by their insufficient social adaptation to new living and learning conditions. The article provides recommendations for school specialists who provide social and psychological support in the educational process of students resettled from the war zone to improve their emotional comfort and academic success.

Keywords: social and psychological support; children resettled from the warzone; difficult life situation; adaptive potential; educational establishment.

Sintesi

L'articolo esamina le peculiarità del sostegno socio-psicologico nel processo educativo dei bambini reinsediati dalle zone di guerra in Ucraina. Lo scopo dell'articolo è diagnosticare le peculiarità dello sviluppo del potenziale adattivo dei bambini reinsediati dalla zona di guerra come una delle fasi principali del supporto sociale e psicologico nel processo educativo di questa categoria di bambini. Sulla base dei risultati della diagnostica, è stato stabilito che i livelli di sviluppo del potenziale adattivo della maggior parte dei bambini reinsediati dalla zona di guerra rientrano nell'intervallo normale. La stragrande maggioranza delle difficoltà incontrate dagli studenti reinsediati dalla zona di guerra sono legate all'assimilazione del materiale didattico, che, a sua volta, è causata dal loro insufficiente adattamento sociale alle nuove condizioni di vita e di apprendimento. L'articolo fornisce raccomandazioni agli specialisti scolastici che forniscono sostegno sociale e psicologico nel processo educativo degli studenti reinsediati dalla zona di guerra per migliorare il loro comfort emotivo e il successo accademico.

Parole chiave: sostegno sociale e psicologico; bambini reinsediati dalla zona di guerra; situazione di vita difficile; potenziale adattivo; istituto scolastico.

1. Introduction

Today, the social situation in Ukraine is aggravated by the fact that the war continues and it is difficult to predict the time and manner of its end. This increases depressive and anxious moods in society, fears and disappointments, and requires extremely difficult, but at the same time very necessary work of psychologists, social workers, social pedagogues, doctors, etc. Nevertheless, the most vulnerable category of victims of military operations are children. The psychological, physical, and often sexual violence that children have experienced from the actions of the occupiers can stay with them for the rest of their lives. The mass media increasingly report on the consequences of what children saw: anxiety disorders, nightmares, irritability, obsessive memories, stuttering, enuresis, suicide attempts, etc. Today's urgent problem is the provision of assistance and support to children relocated from the war zone in adapting to new living and learning conditions. But most researchers are sure that helping children displaced from the war zone to adapt to life in a new social and cultural environment is possible only if the educational institution and the family cooperate.

The team of Ukrainian researchers P. Voloshyn, N. Maruta, L. Shestopalova, G. Kukuruza, and T. Proskurina claim that the hostilities in which the children found themselves should be considered as a difficult life situation that objectively disrupts their life activities, destroys their usual internal connections, can lead to mental traumatization of children, makes it difficult or impossible to realize their internal stimuli (motives, aspirations, values) (Voloshyn, Maruta, Shestopalova, Kukuruza, & Proskurina, 2015).

Socialization of a child during a crisis is quite difficult not only for the child, but also for others. In this regard, the researchers cite the words of the famous American psychologist S. Hall (Arnett, 2006) that adolescence belongs to the transitional period of personality development, the period of *storm and onslaught*, and the content of adolescence is characterized as a *crisis of self-awareness*. S. Hall claimed that only after overcoming this crisis, a teenager can acquire a *sense of individuality*, and until this happens, he will constantly be in a state of searching for his own "I", he will be characterized by instability of behaviour, etc. (Arnett, 2006).

The study of individual and psychological characteristics of children is necessary to identify resources for their development in the future. M. Matiash, S. Subbota, and V. Lunov (2023), researching the *Ukrainian syndrome* as a certain behavioural model of adaptation and the individual position of Ukrainians in relation to the Russian-Ukrainian war, concluded that Ukrainian youth and the regularities of the reduction of the effects of symptoms present before the war and the appearance of new ones during the period of adaptation to the active phase of the war require significant attention of psychologists. The researchers have found that some of the pre-war symptoms and behavioural patterns that could hinder the adaptation of young people to war conditions have disappeared, and this opens up prospects for further research into the resourcefulness of young people. But, at the same time, they recognize that the emergence of new symptoms and behavioural changes cannot be ignored, especially those that lead to young people feeling exhausted and disorganized (Matiash, Subbota, & Lunov, 2023).

American scientists P. Smit, U. Dyrehrov, and U. Yule (2014) believe that the sooner a child can be helped to cope with the stresses of war, the better he will feel and the risk of problems in the future will decrease. Therefore, when the entire population of a country is involved in a war, the first priority is to provide assistance to children (Smit, Dyrehrov, & Yule, 2014).

Scientists L. Hazer & G. Gredebäck (2023), investigating the Syrian conflict and its consequences for children affected by the war, found that potentially traumatic events faced by families with children differ (depending on current and past migration experiences). Thus, the researchers found that at the pre-migration stage there is a high risk of potentially traumatic events related to war. At the stage of actual migration, problems with the lack of housing, a high level of danger of exploitation, etc. are added. At the post-migration stage, common phenomena are the uncertain legal status of migrants, a change in the family situation and the lack of social support. A low level of mental health and constant stress are characteristic of families with children resettled from the war zone. But there are also problems specific to children, related to the lack of parental support, which leads to a delay in the development of children in various areas of life (Hazer & Gredebäck, 2023).

According to I. Grigorenko & N. Savelieva (2017), the work of a social teacher of a secondary education institution, where children resettled from the war zone came to study, is important. A social pedagogue in cooperation with a psychologist and a doctor should provide such children with urgent socio-psychological and medical assistance, create a sense of security and psychological comfort of the child, identify his physical and mental resources, activate his adaptation potential. The researchers note that when providing social and psychological support to families who have been resettled from the war zone, specialists must strictly adhere to the Code of Ethics and requirements for the use of methods and diagnostic tools (to prevent secondary traumatization of children by their actions or inaction). But, if necessary, children and their parents should be referred to other specialists (psychotherapist, neurologist, etc.) or institutions (health care, social services, etc.) (Hryhorenko & Savelieva, 2017).

I. Syomkina (2015) notes in this regard that a social pedagogue, working with a family resettled from a war zone, must perform the following functions, such as: social-psychological-pedagogical (psychological-pedagogical education of family members, preventive support and patronage); diagnostic (studying the needs and characteristics of the family, identifying its potential); protection (legal support of the family, provision of its social guarantees, creation of conditions for the realization of rights and freedoms); organizational and communicative (organization of communication, initiation of joint activities, joint leisure, creativity); prognostic (simulation of situations and development of specific targeted assistance programs); coordination (establishment, support and joint efforts of relevant institutions, centers and services to help families with children resettled from the war zone) (Syomkina, 2015).

I. Parkhomenko (2016) claims that the work of educational institution psychologists with children displaced from the war zone should be aimed at forming a new level of their interpersonal relationships, positive life values, optimism, communicative and speech competence. The initial stage of this work is diagnostics, which is based on: characteristics and opportunities of the educational environment of the school and the region; parenting style, level of upbringing and adaptive abilities of children; principles of interaction between family, school and society in supporting children; development of methods of supporting the adaptation of the child in the educational space of the school; monitoring the level of knowledge, abilities and skills of children (Parkhomenko, 2016).

According to O. Vasylenko (2018), when psychologists conduct psychodiagnostic and correctional-developmental work with children resettled from the war zone, it is important to study the manifestations of their individual psychological characteristics in the context of leading activities and trends in the formation of age-related neoplasms; to investigate the social situation of the development of these children, the peculiarities of their interpersonal

interaction with peers and adults; to study the peculiarities of educational activities and the development of cognitive processes of children (Vasylenko, 2018).

According to Ukrainian researchers A. Tinyakova, T. Hnida, and T. Razvodova, (2015) socio-psychological support of children resettled from the war zone should be aimed at ensuring their successful adaptation to study in an educational institution. They consider socio-psychological support as a complex method based on the unity of four functions: diagnosis of the essence of the problem; information about ways to solve it; developing an action plan to solve the problem; primary help at the stage of solving the problem (Tinyakova, Hnida, & Razvodova, 2015).

So, as we can see, children who have experienced psychological trauma and were resettled from the war zone need psychosocial help and support from specialists. It is necessary to involve their parents in the implementation of socio-psychological support of this category of children, because the assessment of their child's behaviour is the main source of information about his reaction to a psycho-traumatic factor. It is also worth organizing work on the formation of parents' social and communication skills, necessary for improving the quality of relations with their children and recognizing those types of children's behaviour that require professional help.

2. The problem and purpose of the research

The analysis of scientific works shows that in scientific sources attention is mostly paid to socio-psychological work with families affected by military actions. At the same time, the issues of socialization and adaptation of children resettled from the war zone to new living and learning conditions remain poorly researched. However, it is children who need special attention, because they, especially in adolescence, experience these processes very hard and painfully. This is especially aggravated by the presence of bullying, conflicts, aggression or negativism in the school environment.

In view of this, *the purpose of the article* is to diagnose the peculiarities of the development of adaptive potential of children resettled from the war zone as one of the main stages of social and psychological support in the educational process of this category of children.

3. Research methodology

An empirical study of the peculiarities of the development of adaptive potential of children resettled from the war zone was carried out on the basis of the Bar institution of general secondary education of the I-III degrees No. 4 of the Vinnytsia region (Ukraine). The sample consisted of 19 students resettled from the war zone, aged 11-17. It should be noted that psychodiagnostics work with children was carried out outside school hours. The principle of confidentiality of personal information about research participants and the results of its conduct were considered.

To diagnose the levels of development of adaptive potential of children resettled from the war zone, a set of diagnostic methods was used: Questionnaire "Diagnosis of social and psychological adaptation" (SPA) by K. Rogers and R. Diamond (adapted by A. Osnytskyi) (Babycheva, 2020); Methodology for the study of emotional and personal characteristics (Olshannikova-Rabinovych questionnaire) (Kotsan, Lozhkin, & Mushkevych, 2011); The "Incomplete Sentence" method (Pakhomov, 2012).

4. Research results

The analysis of scientific works shows that the results of the diagnosis should be directed to the search for resources to facilitate adaptation in stressful and crisis situations, as well as to the development of emotional and personal characteristics of the investigated participants and the formation of effective coping strategies for behaviour in stressful situations.

To diagnose the adaptation of children resettled from the combat zone to the conditions of interaction with the surrounding people in the system of interpersonal relations, we conducted the Questionnaire “Diagnostics of Social and Psychological Adaptation” (SPA) by K. Rogers and R. Diamond (adapted by A. Osnytskyi) (Babycheva, 2020).

The authors of this Questionnaire claim that a person’s socio-psychological adaptation depends on the individual’s ability to navigate in social situations, to correctly identify the personal characteristics and emotional states of other people, to choose adequate ways of dealing with them and to implement these ways in the process of interaction.

With the help of this Questionnaire, we determined the following indicators of adaptability of students resettled from the war zone:

- adaptability-inadaptability;
- self-acceptance- self rejection;
- acceptance of others-rejection of others;
- emotional comfort-emotional discomfort;
- external control-internal control;
- dominance-subordination;
- escanism (avoidance of problems).

The obtained data of the Questionnaire “Diagnosis of social and psychological adaptation” (SPA) by K. Rogers and R. Diamond (adapted by A. Osnytskyi) among 19 students resettled from the war zone are shown in Figure 1.

№	Indicator	%		
		Low	Norm	High
1	Adaptability	26.3	42.1	31.6
	Inadaptability	21.1	63.1	15.8
2	Self-acceptance	21.1	42.1	36.8
	Self rejection	36.8	42.1	21.1
3	Acceptance of others	26.3	42.1	31.6
	Rejection of others	5.3	63.1	31.6
4	Emotional comfort	21.1	47.4	31.6
	Emotional discomfort	26.3	42.1	31.6
5	External control	15.8	47.4	36.8
	Internal control	26.3	42.1	31.6
6	Dominance	10.5	47.4	42.1
	Subordination	10.5	52.6	36.8
7	Escanism (avoidance of problems)	21.1	47.4	31.6

Figure 1. Results of the study of the levels of social and psychological adaptation of students resettled from the war zone (in %).

The data presented in Figure 1 show that most indicators of social and psychological adaptability of students resettled from the war zone are within the normal range. Particular attention is drawn to the presence of such high indicators as: rejection of others (31.6%), emotional discomfort (31.6%), dominance (42.1%), avoidance of problems (31.6%).

We also found indicators of low adaptation (26.3% of students resettled from the war zone), and maladjustment (15.8% of children). We believe that this is related to the low social activity of these students, fear of the future and difficulties in communicating with peers who are local residents.

With the help of the Methodology for the study of emotional and personal characteristics (Olshannikova-Rabinovych questionnaire) (Kotsan, Lozhkin, & Mushkevych, 2011), we diagnosed the degree of propensity of children resettled from the war zone to experience three basic emotions: fear, anger, joy.

The results of the study of the levels of propensity of students resettled from the war zone to experience fear, anger, and joy are presented in Figure 2.

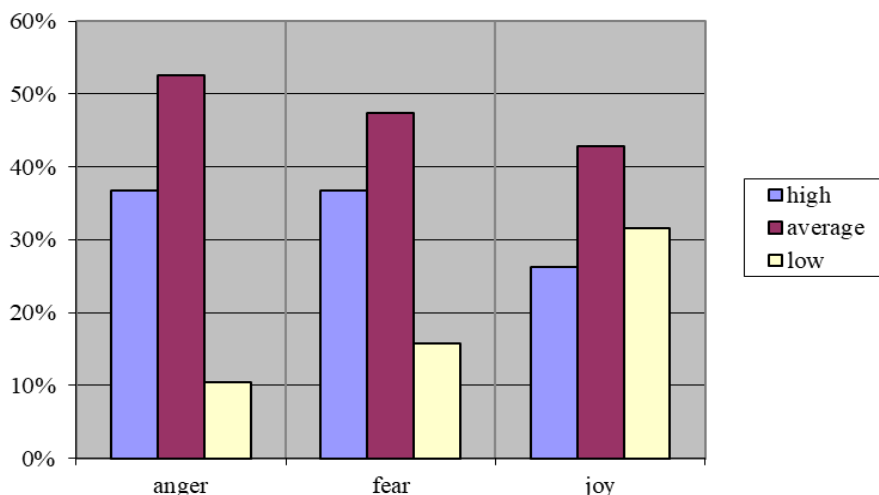


Figure 2. Results of the study of the levels of tendency of students resettled from the war zone to experience fear, anger, joy (in %).

As can be seen from Figure 2, the levels of experiencing three basic emotions by students who were resettled from the war zone are quite different. The study of such an emotion as “anger” attracts special attention. We found out that participants have the average (52.6%) and high (36.8%) levels of anger. In our opinion, this is caused by the situation of forced relocation of children from their native land and home.

Also, military operations in Ukraine contributed to the fact that the emotion “fear” among children resettled from the war zone is expressed by quite high (36.8%) and average (47.4%) indicators. And the emotion “joy”, on the contrary, is characterized by rather low (31.6%) and average (42.8%) indicators.

So, the results of the diagnosis of emotional and personal characteristics of students resettled from the war zone showed that most of the investigated students feel anger and fear, which, in turn, requires psychocorrective work aimed at stabilizing their emotional state.

To find out the attitude of students resettled from the war zone to the educational process in Bar general secondary education institution of the I-III degrees No. 4 of the Vinnytsia

region (Ukraine), we used the “Incomplete sentence” method: “What I dislike most about classes ...” and “The hardest thing for me ...” (Pakhomov, 2012).

The analysis of the content of the statements of students resettled from the war zone allowed us to determine those areas of the educational process that are unpleasant for them and cause a feeling of discomfort. A total of 38 statements were received. All of them are divided into two large groups, which include smaller subgroups. The third group consists of positive statements “I like everything” provided by the students.

It should be noted that 63.1% of the surveyed students gave the statement “I like everything”. This testifies to the high level of their adaptation to the educational process in Bar institution of general secondary education of I-III degrees No. 4 of the Vinnytsia region (Ukraine). Schoolchildren resettled from the war zone, who gave this answer, have practically no difficulties in learning.

Figure 3 shows the results of the study of students’ attitude to the organization of the educational process as a whole.

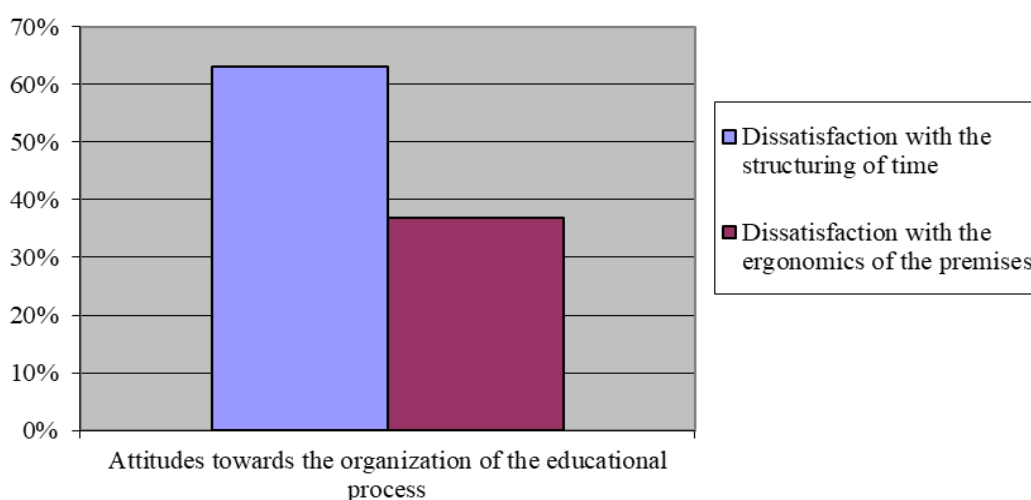


Figure 3. Results of the study of students’ attitudes towards the organization of the educational process as a whole (in %).

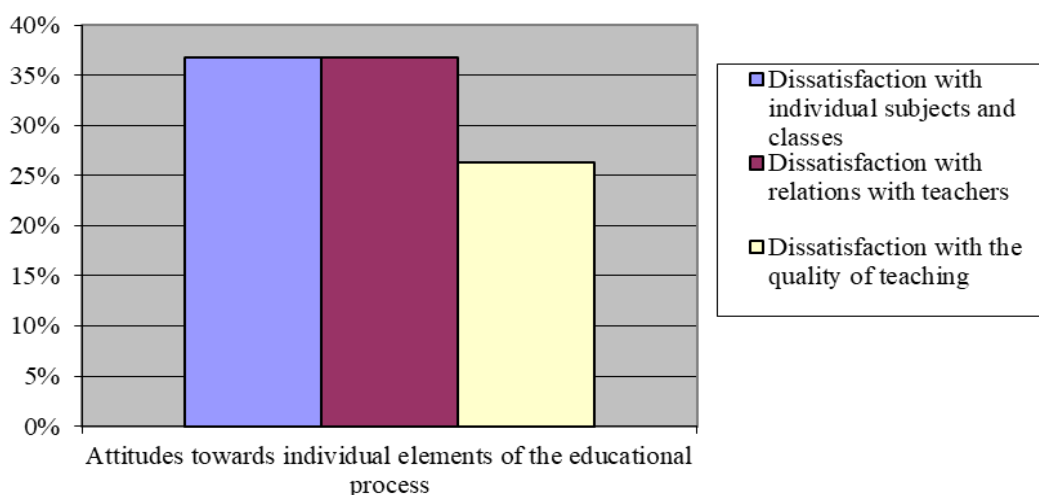


Figure 4. Results of the study of students’ attitude to individual elements of the educational process (in %).

As can be seen from Figure 3, the group “Attitudes towards the organization of the educational process as a whole” is represented by two subgroups: dissatisfaction with the structuring of time (short breaks, long lessons, lack of time) was shown by 63.1% of students, and dissatisfaction with the ergonomics of the premises (hard seats, distance between classrooms) was expressed by 36.8% of the interviewed children.

The results of the study of students’ attitude to certain elements of the educational process are shown in Figure 4.

The group “Attitudes towards individual elements of the educational process” is represented by the largest number of statements. In this group of statements, two variants of statements prevail: dissatisfaction with individual subjects and classes – 36.8% and dissatisfaction with relations with teachers – 36.8%. Dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching was noted by 26.3% of the surveyed students.

Let’s note that dissatisfaction may be a consequence of difficulties students encounter in the educational process. We diagnosed the nature and content of these difficulties using the method of incomplete sentences. Students were asked to finish the phrase: “The hardest thing for me...”. A total of 35 variants of the ending of this sentence were obtained. In the process of analysing the students’ statements, two groups of difficulties were identified.

The results of the study of the difficulties and problems faced by children resettled from the war zone are presented in Figure 5.

№	Groups of statements		%
1.	Difficulties of self-organization		63.1%
	External locus of control “I”	Internal locus of control “I”	
	42.8%	57.9%	
2.	Difficulties in assimilating educational material		68.4%
3.	No difficulties		31.6%

Figure 5. Results of the study of the main groups of difficulties of students resettled from the war zone.

It is worth noting that we analysed the difficulties of self-organization depending on the orientation of localization-control of the Self – externality (go to school at 8 o’clock in the morning; do not get enough sleep; study) and internality (enter the study mode; be on time everywhere; prepare homework, answer, express your opinion). Externality is associated with the predominance of life situations and external factors. And internality is taking responsibility for own behaviour.

As can be seen from Figure 5, the difficulties of self-organization are most relevant for students resettled from the war zone (63.1%). The locus of control is shifted towards internality (internal factors). A rather high rate of students’ difficulties is related to their assimilation of educational material (68.4%). In turn, 31.6% of respondents do not experience difficulties in learning.

So, as we can see, the dissatisfaction with the educational process of students who were resettled from the war zone is caused by their insufficient social adaptation to new living conditions. They associate the reasons for their difficulties in learning with such internal experiences as: the difficulty of entering the study regime, the impossibility of being on time everywhere, preparing homework, expressing own opinion, etc. Therefore, the level

of emotional comfort of students resettled from the war zone needs to be improved and the difficulties mentioned by the children should be taken into account.

With this in mind, we suggest that specialists (who provide socio-psychological support in the educational process of children displaced from the war zone) should develop *the skills and abilities to help such children*. These abilities and skills include:

1. active listening, manifested in attentive listening to the child. In communication with the child, you can use the following words: “yes”, “huh”, “understood”; “you are worried”, “you are upset”, “you are angry”...;
2. the ability to show that you understand the child’s wishes. Give her/him the opportunity to imagine this: “I would like this not to happen, that everything would be calm and we would not have to worry about this situation”;
3. the ability to ask questions that encourage the child to talk: “I listen to you carefully...”, “It is important what you tell...”, “Tell me more about it...”;
4. establishment of trusting relations;
5. providing feedback;
6. the ability to focus attention on the possibilities of solved problems, and not on the problem itself;
7. carefully observe the child’s behavior;
8. treat the child impartially;
9. show patience, understanding, sensitivity and compassion.

Ukrainian researcher L. Volynets (2015) notes that it is important for all school professionals to work with a child who has experienced trauma:

- enlist the support of the child’s relatives;
- try to teach the child to follow a daily routine to avoid additional stress;
- do not scare the child with incomprehensible hints, secrets;
- answer the child’s questions easily and gradually. One question – one answer. When the child masters it, he will be able to ask the following question;
- support the child’s faith in the best;
- be ready for “rude”, “strange”, “aggressive” behaviour of the child;
- do not tell the child: “forget it”, “get it out of your head”. These words will only form the child’s post-stress disorders;
- under no circumstances leave the child alone with his/her feelings;
- do not shame the child and do not blame him/her for what happened;
- be ready to discuss the same events, things, etc., time after time;
- believe and show the child that trauma can be survived;
- remember that some children, for various reasons, are unable to cope with the consequences of traumatic stress on their own, and therefore need the professional help of a psychologist, social worker or other specialists (Volynets, 2015).

5. Conclusions

Thus, the results of the conducted empirical research on the development of adaptive potential of children resettled from the war zone allow us to conclude that most indicators

of social and psychological adaptability of these students are within the normal range. However, the main attention is drawn by the presence of the studied students' low adaptability (26.3% of) and maladaptation (15.8%). In our opinion, this is related to the low social activity of the students themselves, fear of the future and difficulties in communicating with peers and local residents.

The analysis of data from the conducted "Methodology for the study of emotional and personal characteristics (Olshannikova-Rabinovych questionnaire)" showed that the experience of three basic emotions (anger, fear, joy) by students resettled from the war zone is quite different. Most of the subjects are characterized by medium and high levels of anger and fear. And the emotion "joy", on the contrary, is characterized by rather low and average indicators. All these results are caused by the situation of forced resettlement of children from their native land and home.

With the help of the applied method "Incomplete sentence" "What I dislike most about classes ..." and "The hardest thing for me ..." we established that most of the difficulties of students resettled from the combat zone are related to their learning of educational material, which, in turn, is caused by such internal experiences as the difficulty of adapting to the study regime, the impossibility of being on time everywhere, doing homework, responding, expressing own opinion, etc. That is, the dissatisfaction with the educational process of students who were resettled from the war zone is due to their insufficient social adaptation to the new conditions of living and studying.

Thus, the empirical research data obtained indicate the need to develop special measures to develop the adaptive potential of students resettled from the war zone (corrective, developmental, correctional and educational), as well as to increase the level of socio-psychological support in the educational process by specialists who directly work with these children.

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