

Study of the features of fears in preschool children with impaired speech development in comparison with normally developing peers in Moscow City

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Abstract. Currently, the number of children with impaired speech development is constantly increasing, but the emotional difficulties that exist in this category of children remain insufficiently studied. Regional studies are particularly important in this area, and they provide the best insight into which emotional disturbances are related to the structure of the disability and the family situation, and which are related to general social tensions in a particular region and especially in a metropolitan setting. This article presents the research data on the psychological study of fears in children with various speech development disorders and their normally developing peers. The aim of the research is to identify and study the characteristics of fears in preschoolers with speech development impairments in Moscow City. The research methods. The study and analysis of medical, psychological and pedagogical literature, observation, conversation, the study of medical and pedagogical documentation, collection and analysis of anamnestic data, analysis of the products of children's activities, modified questionnaire by A.I. Zakharov "fears in the houses", Peter Muris's modified test "fear levels", a questionnaire for parents to identify the fears of children and parents, test questionnaire of child-parent relationship (QPR) by A.Y. Vargi and V.V. Stolin. methods of mathematical statistics, quantitative and qualitative analysis of the experimental data. The results of the study. Experimental data were obtained and systematized. It characterizes the features of fears of older preschoolers with different impaired speech development in comparison with normally developing peers. The description of the dominant fears of preschool children and their specific features inherent in children with speech disorders is given. Data were obtained on predisposition to an increased number of fears in the male part of the examined group of children. There were identified the average fears indicators that were higher than the existing standards for all the studied groups.

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1 Introduction

There is an increasing of social instability in the modern world, which is why many unfavorable factors fall on children. Such factors influence the formation of the emotional-personal sphere of the child, as well as the emergence of various emotional disturbances. This is especially true for residents of big cities. Currently, the study of fear is becoming one of the most sought-after and fast-developing fields in philosophical and psychological science. One of the most pressing issues is the significant. There is an increase in the number of children with a variety of fears. Therefore, the problem of the emotional distress of children is very relevant in modern special psychology [2, 3, 4, 7]. The specificity of the manifestation of childhood fears is individual; especially in children with various developmental disorders, in whom the primary defect affects the peculiarity of the formation of the emotional-personal sphere and can become a predisposing factor to the occurrence of fears [2, 5, 6]. According to domestic researchers (I.Yu. Levchenko, G.H. Yusupova) the personality of a child with impaired speech development is characterized by low self-esteem, communication disorders, aggression of varying degrees, as well as the development of anxiety and fear. This is associated primarily with difficulties in interpersonal communication. At present, the features of fear manifestations in preschool children with impaired speech development (stuttering, general speech underdevelopment) remain insufficiently studied in special psychology [1, 4, 8]. The absence of good psychopedagogical support can lead to the exacerbation of emotional problems as well as the emergence of undesirable character traits.

2 Materials and methods of research

We have conducted a research on the study of fear in preschoolers with speech problems in Moscow City. The study involved preschool children registered at the Moscow Speech-Language Pathology and Neurorehabilitation Centre, where children from all over the city are observed and treated, as well as their normally developing peers from well-to-do families.

We have examined 154 preschoolers aged 5 to 7 years. 47 children with general speech underdevelopment (girls - 21 (45%), boys - 26 (45%); 47 children with stuttering (girls - 16 (34%), boys - 31 (65%); 60 normally developing children (girls - 28 (44%) and boys 32 (56%).

Analysis of the sample by gender showed that boys prevailed in all three groups. But the largest number of boys was noted in the stuttering group (34% - 65%). The preponderance of boys in the group with speech difficulties indicates a certain tendency to an increase in the growth of speech disorders in males in the population.

The following methods were included in the diagnostic complex:

- questionnaire of Professor A.I. Zakharov "Fears in the houses", modified to identify fears in children of senior preschool age with speech disorders.

The child in the form of a game was asked to answer 30 questions to identify expressed fears. He could give a brief answer to the question or use only a gesture, pointing to a picture to show what he was really afraid of (for children with speech defects the choice of answer without speech load was presented);

- a questionnaire for parents, revealing fears in children and the level of neuroticism;
- author's modification of the test "Fear Levels" by the Dutch scientist Peter Muris.

The projective technique reveals the dominant fears in children and the intensity of their experiences. The technique presents three pictures with different emotional facial expressions. There are a joyful expression, emotion of fear, and a strong expression of fear. The child was asked to answer questions and show the pictures presented.

We interpreted the indicators of manifestations of fear. To *quantitative indicators*, we attributed the average number of age fears. A *qualitative analysis* of the identified fears allowed us to identify the intense and acute fears of preschoolers, the dominant groups of fears and the least concerns of it. Also gender differences were also revealed in the age fears of preschoolers. Statistical data processing was carried out using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test.

3 The results of the study

The primary analysis allowed to determine the average number of fears in the preschoolers under study with speech disorders and normal development. To accentuate the *standard comparative indicator* of fears among children aged 5-7 years, the data presented by Professor A.I. Zakharov were used [3]. According to his research, the average number of fears among preschoolers during this period is: for girls - 11-12, for boys – 9. Too many fears in children (over 14 in boys and 16 in girls) indicate “the development of neurosis or anxiety in the nature and urgency of their elimination” [7].

Comparison of the average number of fears in children, with the results obtained during the research, allowed us to make certain conclusions. The indicator of identified fears in normally developing preschool children is 13 fears, in children with stuttering - 13 fears, in preschool children with general speech underdevelopment (GSU) - 14 fears. This shows a trend towards an increase in the number of fears among modern preschoolers and suggests the need to organize preventive and remedial measures for their harmonization of personal development.

The features of the quantitative manifestations of fear in children with general speech underdevelopment (GSU), stuttering and in their normally developing peers who participated in the study are presented in percent (%) in picture 1.

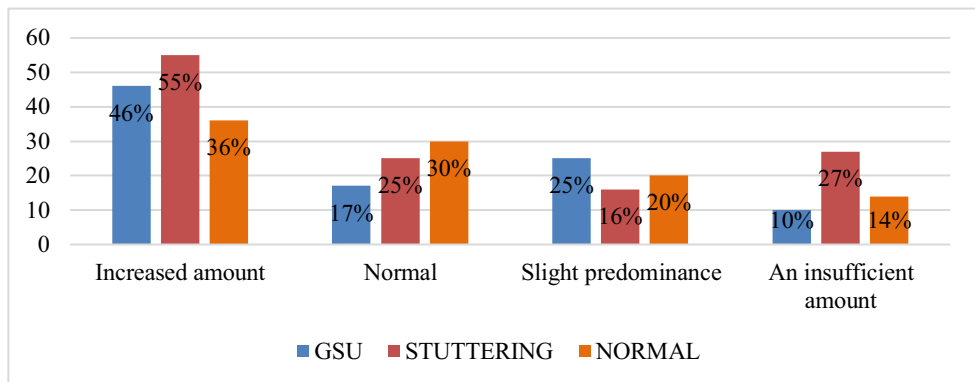


Fig. 1. The distribution of preschool children depending on the average number of fears.

The average indicator of fears in this group of children with stuttering was 13-14, i.e. exceeded the boundaries of the age norm and demonstrated a meaningful variety of fears (darkness, fairy-tale characters, physical harm, speech fear).

Gender features in the manifestation of fear in the group of stuttering children had significant differences. More than half of the boys surveyed showed an increased amount of fear, unlike girls. According to the identified data, stuttering boys are more predisposed to neuroticism. Comparing the number of fears of children with stuttering with the normative indicators proposed by Professor A.I. Zakharov, we obtained data that the number of girls, with a slight predominance of fears, exceeds the number of boys. Girls are more anxious and prudent, which is reflected in their responses to the danger. The “normal” number of

fears in the female and male subgroups has approximately equal distribution. In pic. 2 presents quantitative indicators of fear in boys and girls with stuttering (%).

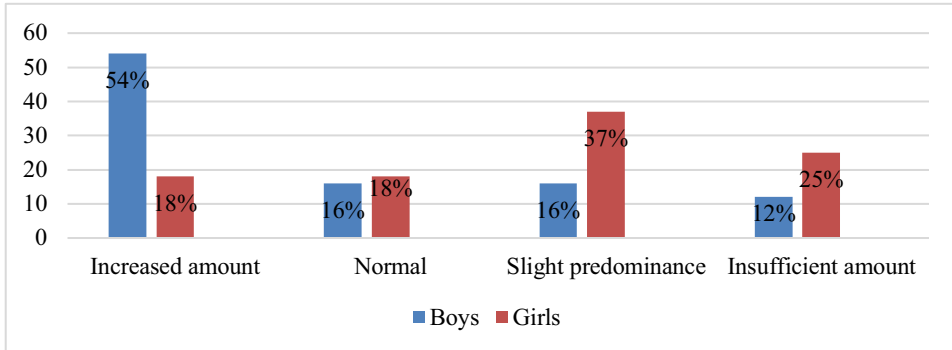


Fig. 2. Gender differences in fears of preschool children with stuttering (%).

Then we analyzed the quantitative indicators of fear in a group of children with a general speech underdevelopment (GSU). The average was 13-14, i.e. exceeds the allowable age limit proposed by Professor A.I. Zakharov [7]. In total, the proportion of children with GSU with an increased number of fears amounted to 71% of the total number of respondents in this group. This high enough indicator may show a predisposition to neuroticism in the subjects. Only 29% of the children had the relevant regulatory indicators of fears (according to AI Zakharov). In 46% of preschool children with GSU, the number of age fears greatly exceeded the age norm indicator, they had speech problems, various neurological symptoms, which was revealed from the medical history and parents survey. A slight excess of the standard age indicator of children's fears was found in 25% of preschoolers in the study group. Gender differences in the number of fears in children with GSU were mild. The increased rates of the number of fears were almost equally distributed among the representatives of both sexes (46-47%). But there were more girls with a standard amount of fear (23%) than boys (11%). There is a definite tendency to increase the number of fears in boys; this is observed not only in children with speech disorders and in peers with normal speech development [1, 13].

The picture 3 shows the comparison of the number of fears in girls and boys with GSU (%).

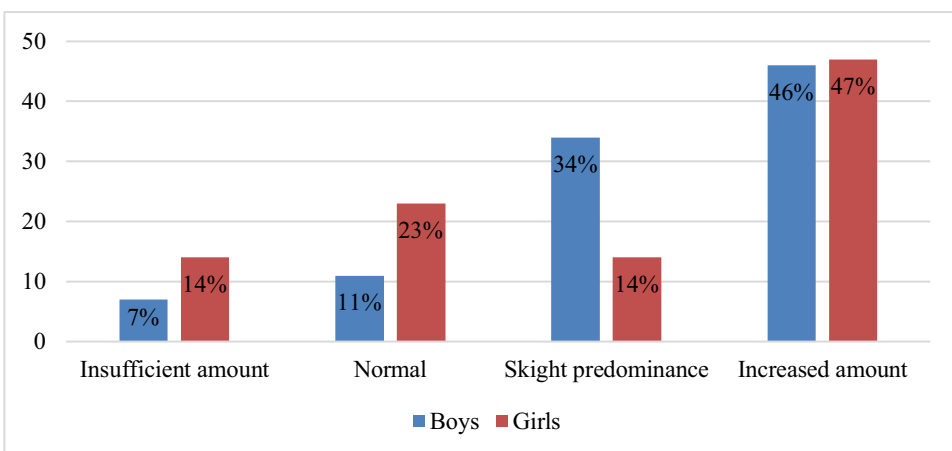


Fig. 3. Gender differences in fear among preschoolers with GSU (%).

In the group with normal development, the average number of fears is 12-13. Comparing these data with the normative indicator of children's fears in children 5-7 years old, we can make the following conclusion: among preschoolers with normal speech development, the average number of fears exceeds the age norm.

In half of the examined children with normal speech development, the number of fears exceeds the allowable age norms imposed by A.I. Zakharov; 36% of the examined children show an increased number of fears which greatly exceeding the age norm. A slight excess of the age indicator of children's fears is present in 20% of preschoolers in the study group. They had increased anxiety. Also they often listed fears, which in reality did not cause feelings of fear, but only if adults could inspire those ones. An analysis of the micro-social development situation showed that normally developing children demonstrate a variety of fears. They were brought up primarily in single-parent, in authoritarian or in dysfunctional families, experiencing a lack of attention and emotional support from parents. Gender differences in the manifestation of fear in children with normal speech development: the number of boys with an increased number of fears, significantly exceeds the number of girls. It indicates an increase in neuroticism in the male population.

The picture 4 shows the indicators of fear in girls and boys with normal speech development (%).

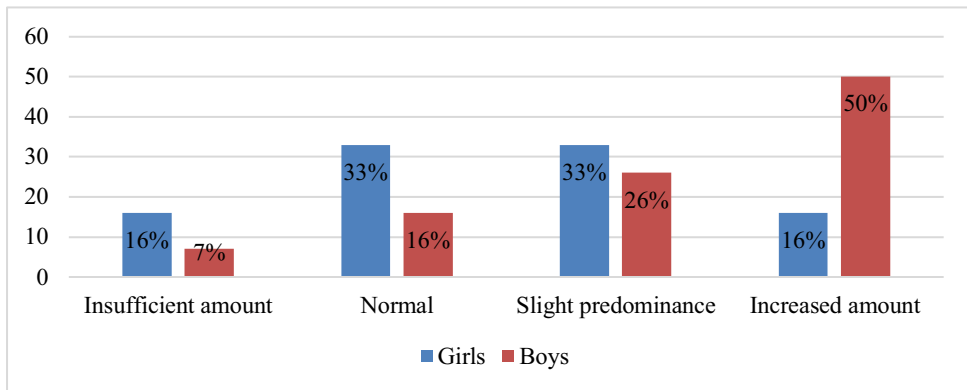


Fig. 4. Gender differences of fears in preschoolers with normal speech development.

4 Discussion

According to the study the increased number of fears in the group of children with impaired speech development was more pronounced than in groups of children with normal speech development. A greater number of preschool children with speech disorders was observed a variety of age-specific and specific fears, reflecting the difficulties of their emotional development and a tendency to neuroticism. More than half of the children studied in the group with normative development had an increased number of age fears, indicating their individual characteristics of emotional development, which is also quite a lot for the child population. In all the studied groups there was a tendency to increase fears among modern children.

5 Conclusion

Our study showed that there is a gender specificity in experiencing fears among preschoolers. A study of gender susceptibility to fears has shown that boys of preschool age have a greater predisposition to neuroticism than girls. Boys with stuttering are more likely

to have an increased amount of fear than girls. The male subgroup of preschoolers without speech problems also had greater rates of fear than the female subgroup. In the group of children with GSU, the gender specificity of fears was not identified. But the number of boys with a slight excess of the age norm of fears is more than girls. Also there is no evidence that there is a certain fear that exists only in boys or girls. These data indicate that this direction requires a more in-depth research allowing to identify the origins of the occurrence. The study showed that the type of impaired speech development affects the manifestation of fears and the level of expression. In groups with a general underdevelopment of speech and stuttering, fear of speech has been identified. It has a different nature of occurrence and does not manifest itself in the same way: for children with GSU, this is a concern about a defect, and for stutterers is moderately pronounced fear of speech. The hypotheses which were put forward at the beginning of the study were confirmed. Children with speech disorders have a large number of age and specific fears associated with clinical manifestations, and there is a specific connection between fears and the gender characteristics of the children being examined.

All data indicate a predominance of the number of fears in all three groups studied, which requires taking measures to prevent and correct fears to harmonize the emotional and personal development of preschoolers for their further successful socialization and adaptation.

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