

UDC 159.9

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PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF WAR ON CHILDREN

Psychological researches show that war has long-lasting effects on children. During war, children encounter two types of traumatic events: unexpected traumatic events and long-term adverse events. As a result, war children are much more often than their peers without war experience to suffer from such problems as anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, dissociative disorders (voluntary social isolation, depersonalization, derealization, unwillingness to talk), behavioral disorders (in particular: aggression, antisocial and criminal behavior, tendency to violence). As noted by Joshi and O'Donnell, the long-term impact of violence on children increases the risk of developing multiple and often long-lasting forms of physical, psychological and social maladjustment [1].

An alarming indicator of military conflicts is the statistics of children affected by hostilities. According to the UN, the number of children affected by war has increased dramatically in recent years. These facts require an immediate response from the global community to ensure the protection and support of war-affected children and to reduce the number of victims among our most vulnerable members of society.

Since the beginning of full-scale military operations in Ukraine, more than 15,500 children have been affected. According to the «Children of War» state portal, as of January 6, 2023, 453 children have died from the aggression, and another 877 children have been injured. Also, almost 14,000 children have been deported (125 have been returned), and 353 are considered missing.

The World Health Organization calls for the protection of children in armed conflicts. According to WHO, 10% of people who have experienced a traumatic event will later have symptoms of psychological trauma, and another 10% will demonstrate behavioral changes or psychological disorders that will become an obstacle to full participation in everyday life (anxiety, depression and psychosomatic disorders). However, with support and availability of psychological help, children can overcome trauma and survive conflicts. Therefore, it is important to ensure effective protection of children's rights and guarantee access to education and psychological assistance for those who are in the combat zone.

The most common reactions of children to the brutal events of military operations are: fears, worry, anxiety, depression, problems with concentration,

sleep disturbance, nightmares and war themes in games. The most traumatic factors of war for children are: death, especially the loss of parents; violence and cruelty; lack of a sense of security; chaotic lifestyle and living conditions; general atmosphere of grief, suffering and negative emotions. These factors affect children's psyche and lead to a number of psychological problems in physical health as a result of intense and long-term exposure to negative stress factors; in communication and relations with society; in the field of meaningful life orientations (life, life of loved ones, stability comes to the fore); with a significant number of fears, etc. [2]

To deal with psychological problems, there are various psychological rehabilitation and assistance programs for children during the war. This assistance is provided at various levels of children's socialization: preschool educational activities, school, sports sections, interest groups. It does not have a strict algorithm of actions and is carried out depending on the conceptual views of a specialist and the areas of work of various organizations. Crisis psychologists teach children special methods of immediate self-help in a stressful situation: muscle relaxation, breathing techniques, development of happy visual images, etc. [3]

It should be emphasized that classes with professional psychologists are a very important, but not decisive, component of overcoming the trauma of war. Most of all, the condition of the child depends on such authority figures in his life as parents, grandparents and other adults who have been in close contact with the child since childhood. It is important to keep the child feeling safe as much as possible: to spend more time with the child and be interested in his life. The child should have a clear daily routine. Children should be taught affordable ways to relieve excess stress. This can be physical relaxation, communication with nature or art, talking with people close in spirit, listening to music, drawing, sculpting, caring for a pet, a toy, or helping parents. Favorite toys are very supportive of the child. Hobbies save the psyche of adults in this difficult time too; it can be anything: needlework, socializing with friends, favorite movies.

In general, it should be noted that war has serious consequences for children, which can lead to long-term problems with psychological health, social adjustment and learning. In addition, these negative disturbances can last a lifetime. Therefore, it is important that governments and society support and help children affected by war.

List of bibliographic references

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(Одержано 16.03.2023)