



Nursulton RAYIMOV^a 

^a PhD doctoral student

Research Institute “Family and Gender”

E-mail: nursultonrayimov@gmail.com

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS CAUSING EMOTIONAL STRAIN IN ADOLESCENCE

Abstract. *This study is devoted to identifying and analyzing the psychological factors that cause emotional strain during adolescence. Adolescence is considered a particularly complex stage of personality development, characterized by a mismatch between biological maturation, psychological changes, and social demands, which leads to emotional instability and internal conflicts. The empirical part of the study involved 120 adolescents aged 13–16, whose levels of state (reactive) and trait (stable) anxiety were assessed using the State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) adapted by Ch. Spielberger and Yu. L. Khanin. The results indicate that the majority of adolescents demonstrate moderate to high levels of anxiety, confirming that emotional strain is a widespread phenomenon during this developmental period. In addition, the nature of family relationships was found to have a statistically significant impact on adolescents’ emotional strain, with higher anxiety levels observed among those raised in conflictual family environments. The findings highlight the multifactorial nature of emotional strain in adolescence and emphasize the importance of comprehensive psychological support, preventive measures, and family–school cooperation to enhance adolescents’ emotional stability and stress resilience.*

Keywords: *adolescence, emotional strain, anxiety, state anxiety, trait anxiety, psychological factors, family relationships, emotional stability, stress, psychological adaptation.*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, the rapid increase in information flow, and the growing complexity of social relations, adolescence emerges as one of the most complex and responsible stages of personality development. During this period, the sharp mismatch

between biological maturation, psychological changes, and social demands leads to intense emotional strain, internal conflicts, and emotional instability in adolescents. Identity crisis, the activation of self-awareness processes, and a heightened need for social evaluation further intensify the psychological foundations of emotional strain. Contemporary psychological research indicates a steady increase in anxiety, stress, depressive states, affective reactions, and emotional outbursts among adolescents. These phenomena are associated not only with individual psychological characteristics but also with family environment, parent-child relationships, peer pressure, academic workload, the influence of social media, and high societal expectations. In particular, insufficient understanding of adolescents' emotional experiences and weak emotional support significantly contribute to the deepening of emotional strain.

Failure to identify and properly manage emotional strain during adolescence may lead to social maladjustment, behavioral disorders, aggression, social withdrawal, and psychosomatic problems in later stages of personality development. Therefore, studying the psychological factors causing emotional strain in adolescence, identifying their mechanisms, and developing prevention strategies are of great scientific and practical importance for education and upbringing systems.

METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aims to identify and analyze the psychological factors that cause emotional strain during adolescence and to reveal the mechanisms through which they influence personality development. The research is conducted based on systemic, personality-oriented, and developmental approaches. Methodologically, the study is grounded in developmental psychology, social psychology, and theories of emotional regulation.

The research process employs theoretical analysis, comparison, generalization, and systematization methods. In addition, at the empirical stage, psychodiagnostic instruments aimed at assessing adolescents' emotional states-such as tests and questionnaires measuring anxiety, stress resistance, and levels of emotional regulation-are planned to be used, along with observation and interview methods. The obtained results are analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively, and conclusions are drawn on the basis of statistical and psychological interpretation. The principle of complexity is adopted as the core methodological approach, within which biological maturation,

personality characteristics, social relationships, and external stress factors are examined in their interrelatedness. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying emotional strain in adolescence.

The problem of emotional strain during adolescence has been widely studied in psychology in connection with crisis stages of personality development. This period is characterized by emotional instability, internal conflicts, and intense affective states, the emergence of which is largely determined by the interaction between biological maturation and social factors. L.S.Vygotsky conceptualized adolescence as a qualitatively new stage of psychological development, emphasizing the reorganization of internal emotional experiences through social relationships and language (Vygotsky, 1991:248). According to his view, external social contradictions are transformed into internal sources of emotional strain within the adolescent's personality.

In D.B.Elkonin's theory of age-related development, interpersonal communication is identified as the leading activity during adolescence. The researcher argues that peer rejection, uncertainty of social status, and failures in communication generate strong emotional strain and anxiety in adolescents (Elkonin, 1989: 176). These experiences directly affect the adolescent's system of self-evaluation. In E. Erikson's psychosocial theory of development, adolescence is described as the stage of "identity versus role confusion." According to the author, uncertainty in self-understanding, ambiguity regarding future plans, and doubts about social roles intensify emotional tension and internal strain in adolescents (Erikson, 1996: 320). This theory interprets emotional strain as a natural, yet potentially risky, phase of personality development.

The issue of stress and emotional strain is thoroughly addressed in the cognitive appraisal theory proposed by R.Lazarus and S.Folkman. In their research, emotional strain is viewed as a condition arising from an individual's subjective appraisal of a situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984: 445). In adolescents, insufficient life experience and underdeveloped emotional regulation mechanisms increase sensitivity to stress. I.S.Kon analyzed adolescents' emotional states in relation to socialization, self-awareness, and the formation of moral positions. His studies suggest that emotional strain often stems from internal conflicts arising during the adolescent's search for a place in society (Kon, 1989: 256). A.V. Petrovskiy, within the framework of small-group psychology, focused on the relationship between an adolescent's social status in the group and their emotional well-being (Petrovsky, 1982:192).

In the works of Uzbek scholars, the issue of adolescents' emotional strain is predominantly examined from the perspectives of family upbringing, the pedagogical environment, and national mentality. In particular, local studies identify conflicts in parent-child relationships, the psychological climate at school, and pedagogical pressure as key factors intensifying emotional strain among adolescents. Thus, the literature review indicates that emotional strain in adolescence arises as a result of a complex interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors. Studying this phenomenon through a comprehensive approach is of significant scientific and practical importance for ensuring adolescents' psychological well-being.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This study was conducted with the aim of empirically identifying the level of emotional strain in adolescence and the psychological factors influencing it. The primary diagnostic instrument used in the research was the State trait anxiety inventory (STAI) adapted by Ch. Spielberger and Yu. L. Khanin. This instrument is widely applied to assess anxiety levels, which represent one of the key components of emotional strain in adolescents.

Sample and Research Design

The empirical study involved 120 adolescents aged 13-16 from general secondary education schools. The sample size was sufficient for statistical analysis, and participants were selected using a random sampling method. During the research, the following indicators were examined:

- level of state (situational) anxiety;
- level of trait (stable) anxiety;
- subjective factors related to family relationships and self-esteem.

Table 1

Distribution of state anxiety levels among adolescents (n = 120)

Anxiety level	Number of respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	22	18.3%
Moderate	41	34.2%
High	57	47.5%
Total	120	100%

The table data indicate that the distribution of state (reactive) anxiety levels among adolescents is shifted toward higher levels. The fact that 57 respondents (47.5%) fall into the high-anxiety group suggests that nearly one in two adolescents experiences heightened emotional arousal, internal tension, restlessness, and apprehension in various situations. This finding can be explained by emotional instability typical of adolescence, increased sensitivity to external evaluation, and intensified reactive responses to stress. Adolescents with a moderate level of anxiety account for 41 participants (34.2%). In this group, anxiety tends to increase in response to specific situational demands-such as examinations, public speaking, conflictual interactions, or peer evaluation-but does not reach a persistent or disorganizing level. This result indicates that these respondents possess relatively developed mechanisms for partial emotional regulation, situational reappraisal, and psychological adaptation. A low level of state anxiety was identified in 22 adolescents (18.3%). Representatives of this group are generally characterized by greater emotional calmness even in stressful situations and a lower tendency toward emotional “outbursts.” However, a low anxiety level should not always be interpreted exclusively as a positive indicator. In some cases, it may be associated with emotional suppression, indifference, or insufficient appraisal of situational significance. Therefore, interpreting this group requires additional information, such as motivation, self-esteem, temperament, and social support.

Overall, the combined proportion of adolescents with moderate and high anxiety levels reaches 81.7% (47.5% - 34.2%), which is a highly significant finding. It indicates that the majority of adolescents are prone to emotional strain in various social and academic contexts. Thus, stress reactivity appears to be widespread among adolescents and may directly affect academic performance, social adjustment, quality of communication, and the process of self-awareness. From a psychological perspective, these results can be explained by age-specific characteristics of adolescence. During this period, sensitivity to peer opinion, social status, self-worth, and criticism increases, while emotional regulation mechanisms may not yet be fully stabilized. As a result, even seemingly minor situations-such as answering questions in class, receiving grades, reprimands, or evaluations on social media-can become significant sources of psychological pressure for adolescents. From an applied standpoint, the table results identify a risk group for school psychologists and class teachers. Adolescents with

high anxiety levels (47.5%) require preventive and corrective interventions aimed at developing emotional regulation skills, stress management strategies, self-confidence, and social support. For the moderate-anxiety group, strengthening adaptive resources, enhancing communication skills, and teaching cognitive reappraisal and coping strategies are likely to be effective.

Table 2

Distribution of trait anxiety levels among adolescents (n = 120)

Anxiety level	Number of respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	24	20.0%
Moderate	46	38.3%
High	50	41.7%
Total	120	100%

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that trait anxiety levels among adolescents are considerably high. Trait anxiety is not a temporary, situation-dependent emotional reaction but rather a stable psychological disposition that reflects a tendency to perceive various situations as threatening or anxiety-provoking. In this regard, the distribution shown in the table reflects adolescents' overall emotional background and their predisposition to internal emotional strain. First, 50 respondents (41.7%) were classified into the high trait anxiety group, indicating that nearly four to five out of every ten adolescents are prone to persistent internal tension, apprehension, insecurity, and expectations that "something negative may happen." Adolescents in this group are typically highly sensitive to criticism, fear evaluation, and display excessive concern over mistakes. As a result, even ordinary situations-such as academic assessment, public speaking, peer opinion, or examinations-are perceived as sources of psychological pressure, which may lead to frequent emotional strain and increased fatigue. Second, a moderate level of trait anxiety was identified in 46 adolescents (38.3%). Although anxiety in this group is not constantly elevated, it tends to intensify when stressors increase or when social and emotional support is insufficient. These adolescents generally possess adaptive resources, including the ability to cope, rationally appraise situations, and regulate emotions; however, these capacities are not yet stable. Therefore, the moderate-anxiety group can be considered a transitional zone between risk and resilience: with appropriate psychological support, emotional stability can be strengthened, whereas in the absence of such support, there is a risk of progression toward higher anxiety levels. Third, a low

level of trait anxiety was observed in 24 adolescents (20.0%). Individuals in this group typically respond to situations with relative emotional calmness, demonstrate self-control, and recover more quickly from failure. However, low anxiety should not be interpreted exclusively as a positive indicator. In some cases, it may reflect emotional suppression, denial of problems, or social disengagement. Therefore, a more accurate interpretation of this group requires additional indicators, such as motivation, empathy, social activity, and self-esteem.

A particularly important finding is that the combined proportion of adolescents with moderate and high trait anxiety reaches 80.0% (38.3% - 41.7%). This suggests that a substantial proportion of adolescents are at risk of developing persistent emotional strain. While state anxiety is situational and temporary, trait anxiety functions as a more stable “emotional background” that systematically affects academic functioning (attention, memory, work efficiency), social interaction (inhibition, shyness, or irritability), and self-evaluation (reduced self-confidence). Practical implications: Given the high prevalence of trait anxiety among adolescents, the results highlight the need to prioritize psychological prevention and intervention in school practice for this group. For adolescents with high trait anxiety, interventions should focus on developing emotional regulation skills, self-confidence, stress management (coping strategies), and cognitive reappraisal. For those with moderate trait anxiety, strengthening adaptive resources and enhancing a supportive social environment are likely to be effective.

Table 3

Mean scores of state (reactive) anxiety according to the nature of family relationships (student's t-test)

Groups	n	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	t	p
Positive family environment	62	38.2	6.1	2.736	0.01**
Conflictual family environment	58	46.8	7.3	-	-

The results presented in Table 3 clearly demonstrate that the nature of family relationships has a significant effect on the level of state (reactive) anxiety among adolescents. Adolescents raised in a positive family environment showed a lower mean level of reactive anxiety ($M = 38.2$, $SD = 6.1$), whereas those growing up in a conflictual

family environment exhibited a substantially higher mean score ($M = 46.8$, $SD = 7.3$), indicating a pronounced difference between the two groups. The difference between the mean values amounts to 8.6 points ($46.8 - 38.2$), suggesting that persistent tension, conflicts, and a lack of emotional support within family relationships markedly increase adolescents' sensitivity to stressful situations. For adolescents raised in conflictual environments, external situations-such as evaluation, criticism, and interactions with peers-are more likely to be perceived as threatening and to elicit stronger emotional reactions. The statistically significant result of the Student's t-test ($t = 2.736$, $p = 0.01$) indicates that this difference is not random and confirms the research hypothesis. In other words, the nature of family relationships represents an important psychological determinant of reactive anxiety in adolescents. The higher standard deviation observed in the conflictual family group ($SD = 7.3$) further suggests greater individual variability in emotional states within this environment. From a psychological perspective, these findings imply that a positive and supportive family environment functions as a protective factor, reducing emotional strain in stressful situations. Conversely, a conflictual family environment acts as a risk factor that intensifies emotional strain. Therefore, from an applied standpoint, strengthening preventive and corrective interventions related to family environment within school psychological services is of critical importance for promoting adolescents' emotional stability.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study confirm that emotional strain during adolescence is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon. In particular, the high levels of both state (reactive) and trait anxiety indicate that the majority of adolescents demonstrate heightened emotional sensitivity to stressful situations. According to the results of Table 1, high state anxiety was identified in 47.5% of adolescents, suggesting that external evaluation, academic demands, and peer relationships function as significant sources of psychological pressure during this developmental period. The indicators of trait anxiety presented in Table 2 further demonstrate that emotional strain in some adolescents is not merely a temporary condition but is becoming a relatively stable psychological characteristic. The finding that 41.7% of adolescents exhibited high trait anxiety points to the risk of prolonged emotional tension characterized by persistent internal

discomfort, reduced self-confidence, and negative expectations. This phenomenon can be explained by the insufficient stabilization of emotional regulation mechanisms during adolescence.

The results shown in Table 3 statistically confirm that the nature of family relationships is a key determinant of emotional strain in adolescents. Adolescents raised in conflictual family environments displayed significantly higher levels of reactive anxiety compared to their peers from supportive families ($t = 2.736$; $p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that a lack of emotional support within the family increases adolescents' sensitivity to stress. Consistent with socio-psychological theories, the family serves either as a primary protective factor or as a risk factor in adolescent emotional development. When compared with existing theoretical and empirical studies, the obtained results are consistent with the perspectives proposed by L.S.Vygotsky, E.Erikson, D.B.Elkonin, and contemporary stress theories. The intensification of social relationships and the search for personal identity during adolescence emerge as key psychological mechanisms that amplify emotional strain. At the same time, the empirical findings suggest that the influence of family-related factors may be even stronger than that of situational stressors.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that understanding emotional strain in adolescence requires a systematic consideration of both individual psychological characteristics and the family environment. The findings provide a scientific basis for improving psychological services in educational institutions, strengthening family-school collaboration, and developing preventive and corrective programs aimed at enhancing adolescents' emotional stability. This research was designed to examine the psychological factors contributing to emotional strain during adolescence from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. The findings confirm the relevance and multifaceted nature of this issue. Adolescence was identified as a complex stage of personality development in which the mismatch between biological maturation, psychological changes, and social demands contributes to increased emotional strain.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, reducing and preventing emotional strain during adolescence requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account not only individual psychological characteristics but also the family environment, the psychological climate at school,

and social support factors. The findings of this study provide a solid scientific and practical foundation for improving psychological services in educational institutions, strengthening family-school collaboration, and developing preventive and corrective programs aimed at enhancing adolescents' emotional stability and stress resilience.

REFERENCES

1. Vygotsky, L. S. (1991). *Pedagogicheskaya psikhologiya*. Moscow: Pedagogika.
2. Elkonin, D. B. (1989). *Psikhologiya vozrastnykh periodov*. Moscow: Pedagogika.
3. Erikson, E. (1996). *Detstvo i obshchestvo*. Moscow: Progress.
4. Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York, NY: Springer.
5. Kon, I. S. (1989). *Psikhologiya podrostka*. Moscow: Prosveshcheniye.
6. Petrovsky, A. V. (1982). *Lichnost i kollektiv*. Moscow: Pedagogika.