

## Psychological aspect of taking the use procedure

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**Abstract.** the paper presents results of an experimental study on the mental state of high school graduates preparing to pass the USE (the Unified State Exam). There are showed the components of this state and the relationship that exists between them. There are the factors analyzed and highlighted, that are likely to generate increasing mental tension of school graduate in preparation for the exam. Based on this, recommendations are made to reduce these tensions.

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### Introduction

The evaluation process of the school graduate's knowledge by using this USE procedure firmly established in the life of Russia. Teacher and parent communities are gradually adapting to this type of examination [1]. They see it as a prescription and each begins actively adapt to it with their positions: teachers - through a stronger focus in the process of teaching to prepare to pass the USE, parents - through an intensive search for effective tutors, or by finding some other moves for their children of a prestigious universities[2, 3].

Namely opportunities, that open the USE successfully pass for admission to higher education, is a great advantage in entered assessment procedures of the school graduate's knowledge [4, p. 127-132]. Getting a high score on the exam allows the school graduate to apply for admission to almost any university in Russia without any additional exams. Thus, school graduate has a very real and sufficiently high chance to be a freshman of this university of his choice. This potential opportunity is very important for graduates of peripheral schools in general, and especially for graduates of rural schools. Besides the USE, though not a very perfect, the primitive form of the test, but still allows you to objectively evaluate the level of the student [5,6]. Unfortunately, the test form of knowledge evaluation with a choice of correct answer from a number of data is very imperfect in itself, in its internal potential [7], so there is a sharp conflict between the traditional form of schooling, stressing the systematic transfer of knowledge to learners (in some degree, providing assimilation of knowledge) and very limited potential of testing procedure itself, informing only about competence in some of the facts, formulas, i.e., all, that is quite easily formalized, but is poorly suited to assess the foundations of systematic knowledge in

general. Particularly bright, this USE defect manifested in humanities.

Inevitably generated by the circumstances of life involuntary focus of teachers and parents on the central "supertask" - obtaining a high score of a graduate on the USE - often leaves out of sight, the opposite USE direction - raising the level of neuroticism of school graduates associated with preparing for this USE and its surrender. Certainly any exam causes increased tension in the person, who is taking it, and the USE in this sense is no exception [8]. However, the fact that - all focused on the USE - both evaluation of school graduate and, most importantly, further prospects of the future, has taken on the fragile shoulders of the fledgling graduate a fair burden of responsibility, which can have very negative consequences for graduate's mental health and even, in case of failure on the exam, cause suicidal ideation. The importance of everything mentioned above, has led to the need for special psychological research.

### Research method

In a research for the original hypothetical assumption, there was taken quite simple and clear idea that already on a stage of preparation to take the USE, level of neuroticism of school graduate's personality should start rising significantly there. To test this hypothesis, we conducted an experimental research, the essence of which was the following. It was decided to assess the mental state of graduates, i.e. grade 11 pupils, directly on a stage of preparation to take the USE and compare it with the psychological state of a group of students, also seniors, but not currently facing such a problem – grade 10 pupils at the same school.

Following methods were used for integrated assessment of psychological state. Methodology "T & D" [9, p.134 -138 ], which had a scale of anxiety

and depression. It should be noted, the scale of this questionnaire are arranged so that higher values on them talk about good subjective well-being of the test, while a low value indicates a pronounced anxiety and depression of personality. As a second method there was used Eysenck [10, p.122] methodology for self-assessment of mental states. This methodology has four scales - anxiety, frustration, aggression and rigidity. Finally, the third methodology allowed us to evaluate the stress state of the examinee [9, p.115]. The scales of the last two methods, unlike the first, were built in a traditional way, i.e. high significance of them talked about the bright severity in the examinee's quality evaluating.

As a basis for the research, there was chosen the secondary school №111 of Kazan city. Observed group of graduates - grade 11 pupils, consisting of 19 people and a control group of grade 10 pupils, consisted of 17 people. The timing of the survey procedures, defined by period of beginning of graduates' taking trial the USE, in a process of preparation to it. By the time it was the middle of April. Further the arithmetic means and the magnitude of the values of the standard deviations evaluated for both groups. The results are shown in Table 1.

### Results of the study and it's discussion

First, as indicated by the data – that at the stage of preparation to the procedure of taking the USE, pupils begin to be observed by strengthening of nerve tension, which is a sign of indicators' deterioration in all taken tests by graduates, compared with grade 10 pupils' performance. To be more specifically, first of all it concerns the measure of anxiety and depression. While 10 grade pupils' arithmetic average by "T & D" method for anxiety (3.65) and depression (2.32) are in the area corresponding to good.

**Table 1. Indicators of methods, characterizing mental states of pupils**

| Methods  |                  | Method "T & D" |            | Self-assessment of mental states |             |            |          | Stress state |
|----------|------------------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------|------------|----------|--------------|
| grades   | indicators       | anxiety        | depression | anxiety                          | frustration | aggression | rigidity | stress       |
| 11 grade | average          | 0.77           | 0.66       | 8.53                             | 8.23        | 9.3        | 8.73     | 3.74         |
| 11 grade | stand. deviation | 3.96           | 4.53       | 3.22                             | 3.96        | 3.53       | 3.22     | 1.66         |
| 10 grade | average          | 3.65           | 2.32       | 6.14                             | 5.64        | 7.07       | 6.64     | 2.64         |
| 10 grade | stand. deviation | 2.88           | 4.55       | 3.14                             | 3.08        | 3.29       | 3.91     | 1.26         |

Notes: according to "T & D" method, anxiety and depression are characterized by low indicators of the scale.

Psychological health of pupils, school graduates' values of these parameters (0.77 and 0.66,

respectively) are shifted to the zone of uncertainty. If we consider that the magnitude of these figures below (-1.28) indicates a pronounced mental tension, anxiety and depression, and the standard deviation for anxiety and depression of graduates are respectively 3.96 and 4.53, it becomes clear - very many of the pupils in this class (approximately 30-40%) even at this time begin to experience acute anxiety and depression.

The above is confirmed by the results obtained by the anxiety scale by H. Eysenck method. If the tenth's grade pupils it is 6.14, which indicates the absence of anxiety in these pupils, then high school graduates' figure (8.53) goes to the zone of average level of anxiety.

By the nature of a very close, almost similar changes came with indicators of frustration and rigidity - the graduates had elevated values (8.23 to frustration, 8.73 for stiffness), while at the tenth grade they are on the middle level (5.64 for frustration, 6.64 for stiffness).

The experimental data suggest a negative impact of the procedure of taking the USE, on emotional and as a whole psychophysiological state of school graduates. I would like to draw attention to one circumstance. For ourselves, we felt ethically totally unacceptable, if not impossible, to conduct this research with graduates directly into the period of taking the USE, as on the current exams literally decide their fate and any foreign intervention could affect the quality of the test indicator. That's why April was chosen for the research - the month when being a preparation for the USE, but at the same time it is as close to the period of his actual conduct. However, as it is evident from our results, at the stage of preparation for the exam, very many graduates' (about 40%) level of nervous tension begin to rise significantly. It is quite clear that during a procedure of taking the USE this trend will only increase and with a very high degree of confidence can be argued, that after its holding, more than half of the graduates will have a state of anxiety and depression, and these negative states of the graduates' do not disappear immediately after taking the USE. Even if in a weakened form, but this state will continue to persist until the graduate's enrollment in the university.

Injustice, taking place in the results of the USE, in particular by getting some information about the correct option by some graduates' from the internet, further aggravates the condition of good, scrupulously working pupils. Meanwhile, for this injustice by virtue of purely objective reasons - great length of our country - there are real grounds. In Russia, which has eight time zones, with only one option of the USE, will always remain an opportunity for "timely" delivery over the Internet making the

right choices from the eastern part of the country to the west. The only way possible, to combat this phenomenon seems to use several options of the USE, each of which is designed for a maximum of one or two time zones.

But even if we exclude this factor, there is a set of other circumstances that create favorable conditions for the emergence of neuroticism prohibitive surrendering the USE graduate. The main reason for this is focusing of a number of people on the graduate's USE results [11]. First, it was his parents who, of course, "wish happiness to their child", the personification of that in their submissions in this case is a good secondary school diploma and to ensure that happiness, they, without realizing it, will infinitely disparage their child by need in constant preparation for the USE. Secondly - a school interested in increasing the average value of the USE by the prestigious (and financial reasons). In the third - the district and municipal administrations as executive authorities in the face of their respective divisions, for which the average score on the exam is one of the criteria for defining the efficiency of their activities [1, 12]. The result is that the graduate to be under severe pressure from their parents, on the one hand, and teachers, reflecting the interests of not only the school, but the administration - on the other. Naturally, weak child soul cannot withstand such psychological pressure, and that generates an invalid neurotization child's personality. Therefore, it seems that the objective conditions, contributes to lowering the psychological pressure on the graduate will create a system of evaluation of the school and the district or the city administration, in which the effectiveness of their educational activities will not be the result of the average score on the exam.

Very interesting to study how we investigated psychological parameters graduates interconnected. Identifying these relationships would let albeit partially, but to answer the question about what in this case the psychological mechanism of anxiety and depressive state. This prompted us to conduct an additional, correlation analysis of the linkages between the studied by us parameters. The results showed the following. As indicators of anxiety and depression indicators by T & D method of secondary school graduates are very highly correlated with indicators of frustration and rigidity. The values of correlation coefficients are: anxiety - frustration - ( $r = -0.79$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ); anxiety - rigidity ( $r = -0.77$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). These data for depression is: depression - frustration ( $r = -0.77$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ); depression - rigidity - ( $r = -0.69$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). (Negative correlation coefficients due to the fact that the scales of anxiety and depression according to the methodology of T and D have the opposite direction).

Moreover, rigidity and performance of frustration among themselves also highly correlated ( $r = 0.6$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, it appears that these four indicators form a close correlation constellation. As follows from the data, although not much, within the average rate, but still graduates' increased stress in their behavior begin to manifest elements of aggressiveness. Despite the fact that pupils cope with the state of stress quite well, stress makes a significant contribution to the development of graduate's doldrums - the value of the correlation coefficient depression - stress has been very significant ( $r = -0.48$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ).

From a psychological point of view, the mechanism of interaction of listed personal settings can be explained, apparently, as follows. The root cause of emotional stress of graduate, taking the USE, besides the already existing state of stress, are graduate's fears, caused by the fact that there would not enough time to perform the test tasks within the prescribed period for testing. This fear is the reason of graduate's anxiety, which gradually increases as the end of the testing procedure. Upon completion of testing, due to the expectations of its results and in full awareness of the fact that not all jobs are executed, and executed from, perhaps, solved many errors, a graduate's state of frustration is growing. It reaches its peak when the test results become known and, unfortunately, many of the negative expectations of the pupil being justified. The result of all this is the emergence of the state of depression, which is a form of permission state of frustration.

From the above, it is clear that under test form of exam the most disadvantaged position have slow, rigid (though perhaps thoughtful and well versed in the training material) graduates, as the successful fulfillment of the exam requires the presence of pupil's "quick intelligence". Inconsistency of pupil's individual activities style to such requirements, given for current examination, generates strong frustration, leading to subsequent depression.

These results suggest that even only the procedure of preparation for the USE, creates a high level of pupil's anxiety and helps give them a state of depression. And the procedure of the USE and further expectation of the results will provide much more negative impact on the test-takers. Hence it is clear that it is necessary to develop a system of measures that would neutralize the graduates' this, though inevitable, but extremely undesirable negative emotional background. However, this cannot be achieved only through the use of a purely psychotherapeutic methods of work with the pupils. For this, it is necessary to eliminate those actually operating factors that can generate and amplify pupils' emerging anxiety and depression. To achieve

meaningful results in this way, you need to create the objective conditions, lowering the degree of psychological pressure on the personality of the school graduate themselves. This is possible when the evaluation of the effectiveness of school activities and public authorities, would depend a little on indicator of "the average USE". Teachers would get rid of the need to perform the installation defined outside "at all costs to mobilize pupils to pass the USE successfully".

In adolescence, any injustice experienced emotionally very serious. Currently we do not deal with the negative influence of the injustice factor in shaping the personality of boys or girls, which in reality is extremely large. In this case, we are interested in its role in terms of maintaining a graduate's normal emotional state. In the case of the USE, it can be achieved by providing absolutely fair procedure for implementation of the exam, eliminating any outside assistance, equal for all. One of the objective conditions for this is to use multiple options equivalent test measuring materials, each of which is designed for each time zone.

### Conclusions

Based on the points above, we can make the following conclusions.

1. Procedure of preparation for the USE leads to increased anxiety and depression of overwhelming majority of school graduates.

2. Apart from anxiety and depression, same graduates face increased levels of frustration and stress in preparing for the USE. There is also an increased rigidity of pupils. Correlation analysis shows that all five of these indicators are closely interlinked with each other. Therefore, we can assume that, first, the cause of neuroticism gain graduates, taking the USE, is their frustration and, secondly, slow learners in this procedure are suffering the most.

3. One of the reasons for the increase of graduates' neuroticism in their preparation for the USE is a pressure to which they are exposed both by parents and by the school. The reason for this is high concentration on the USE indicator, interest of not only the graduates, but also his family, and even the city administration. Exception of the average score on the USE of indicators characterizing the efficiency of the administration, will reduce the external pressure on pupils and, as a consequence, reduce the level of his mental tension.

4. During the procedure of the USE, special attention should be paid to the creation of conditions

that would ensure the highest possible objectivity in assessing pupils' knowledge. This relates primarily to the potential exclusion of the test-taker to use the Internet. Failure to comply with this provision creates disbelief in justice of the USE procedure among conscientious young boys and girls and cause negative emotions.

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