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CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF AN ADULT

Abstract. The article presents an analysis of modern views on the specifics of childhood trauma and the psychological well-being of an adult. The growing number of socio-political challenges caused by war, economic crisis, etc. does not exclude the presence of complex life experiences that require excessive efforts to maintain and preserve the psychological stability of adults. Unfortunately, traumatic situations can occur in a person's life regardless of age, including in childhood. This experience often determines the further ontogenesis and prospects of psychological well-being, which determined the interest in this issue. The purpose of the study is to analyze scientific approaches to understanding childhood trauma and the prerequisites for the psychological well-being of an adult. The article applies methods of theoretical study of scientific literature (analysis, synthesis, generalization, comparison of approaches of scientists) in relation to highlighting the problem of childhood trauma and the psychological well-being of an adult. The theoretical methods used present the essence of the concept of childhood trauma and the representation of remote long-term consequences of psychological well-being in adulthood. As a result of the conducted scientific investigations, it was determined that childhood trauma is defined by complex negative events in the ontogenesis of a child, such as emotional, physical, sexual violence, emotional deprivation. It is emphasized that childhood trauma has a deep and long-term impact on the psychological well-being of an adult. It is highlighted that childhood trauma provokes the risk of forming personality pathology, emotional regulation disorders, psychosomatic symptoms, anxiety and depressive disorders. It is presented that the consequences of trauma affect the level of self-esteem, the quality of interpersonal relationships, provoke avoidance of help, and form negative attitudes about oneself and the world. Within the framework of adult life, this is manifested in a tendency to destructive forms of behavior, in particular, substance abuse, a feeling of inner emptiness. Modern scientific views are summarized, which emphasize the importance of supporting self-compassion, positive self-perception and a safe family environment as resources for psychological resilience in adulthood.

Keywords. violence, personality, psychological well-being, self-knowledge, family, trauma, anxiety.

Introduction. The best representatives of psychological, medical, and pedagogical science have established the principles of maintaining psychological well-being as the basis for healthy functioning of the individual throughout life. Modern research emphasizes that childhood experiences, in particular those related to social cataclysms, violence, or emotional deprivation, have a profound and lasting impact on psychological health in adulthood. In this regard, the study

of the concept of childhood trauma, mechanisms of functioning, and prerequisites for well-being in adulthood is of particular importance. The psychological discourse on understanding the concept of “childhood trauma” is far from unambiguous. Instead, the integrative approach represents childhood trauma as a child’s psychological reaction to events that exceed his or her ability to cope with them independently, causing strong fear, pain, despair, and a sense of danger. It is known that in the long term, childhood trauma can worsen the psychological well-being of an adult. Despite significant progress in studying the consequences of childhood trauma, psychological science needs more attention focused not only on identifying complications, but also on supporting the resources of the individual in the healing process.

Stating the aim of the study. To analyze scientific approaches to understanding childhood trauma and the prerequisites for the psychological well-being of an adult.

Methods. The article uses methods of theoretical study of scientific literature (analysis, synthesis, generalization, comparison of approaches of scientists) in relation to highlighting the problem of childhood trauma and the psychological well-being of an adult. The theoretical methods used present the essence of the concept of “childhood trauma” and the representation of the long-term consequences of psychological well-being in adulthood.

Summary of the main material. The problem that almost every researcher of mental trauma and psychotrauma has paid attention to is understanding the essence and content of these phenomena. The interpretation of these processes is closely interconnected with the author’s affiliation to certain branches of social sciences and scientific directions. The operationalization and assessment of trauma is the basis on which research into the consequences of traumatic experience is based and forms the basis of an important discourse. Carrying out a dictionary interpretation, the concept of “psychological trauma” is defined as damage (injury) that has arisen as a result of the action of personally significant information on the human psyche and is capable of leading to the development of a mental disorder due to the insufficiency of psychological defense mechanisms [Syniavskiy & Serhieienkova, 2007].

In the scientific literature, the definitions of “psychological trauma” and “childhood trauma” are observed. Let us outline the differentiation of these phenomena. From the point of view of T. Tytarenko, the phenomenon of “psychological trauma” is meaningfully filled with the emotional reaction of the individual to an unexpected sudden event that has a pathogenic effect on the personality [Tytarenko, 2020]. The scientist identifies the main characteristics of the nature of psychological trauma: the subconscious form of mental activity; the uncertainty and rigidity of mental processes; the presence of internal conflict as a clash of contradictions in the self-perception of the individual; the psychological significance of the psychotraumatic situation for the individual; the intrapersonal localization of the psychotraumatic action.

Childhood trauma, in turn, narrows the definition of the problem as a collective definition of traumatic experiences up to 18 years of age, including physical neglect of the child’s needs, emotional deprivation [Doba, 2022]. Childhood maltreatment as a result of traumatization is also accompanied by emotional, physical and sexual violence [Zheng, 2024]. Childhood trauma has long-term adverse consequences for cognitive functions, the emotional sphere and health in general (for example, cognitive deficits, emotional dysregulation, substance abuse and a high risk of mental disorders in the ontogenesis of the personality) [McKay, 2021]. Thus, it was found that the place of childhood trauma is key in the general understanding of the psychology of personality trauma, which determines the further strategy of personality development.

Let us consider modern approaches to understanding the phenomenon of psychological well-being. In the scientific works of L. Serduk highlighted that psychological well-being is closely interconnected with the value-meaning orientations of the individual and its resilience [Serduk, 2017]. Analyzing the main components of psychological well-being, which were identified by K. Riff, Ukrainian scientists L. Tsibukh, O. Tsisar identify three main components: positive self-esteem, mental health and the presence of life goals [Tsybukh & Tsisar, 2022]. From this perspective, psychological well-being contributes to flexibility in overcoming stress and complicated life difficulties. In turn, the chronic accumulation of stressful experiences can largely predict the negative psychogenesis of the functioning of children and adults [Arslan, 2024]. That is why the study of factors that support or undermine psychological well-being is a valuable task of fundamental and applied psychology.

For a more detailed understanding of childhood trauma and psychological well-being of an adult, let us turn to the fundamental teachings within the framework of psychogenic theory. We consider the thesis that childhood traumatic experiences are significant predictors of long-term pain and anxiety disorders in adults to be important. When studying psychotrauma, N. Kascakova [Kascakova, 2020] analyzes the “unholy” triad: childhood trauma, anxiety, and chronic pain. The comparison as “unholy” is determined by the process of interaction of factors, where it is proven that the psychoemotional consequences of trauma are transformed into somatic symptoms with a long-term effect. Scientists have found that individuals with a history of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse are more likely to report acute somatoform pain. Long-term physical suffering increases emotional vulnerability, reduces well-being, and life satisfaction.

No less important is the statement that the experience of childhood trauma is interconnected with the tendency to use psychoactive substances, which is regulated by self-compassion. In empirical studies [Habibi, Soleimani & Zeinali, 2025], physical, psychological, and sexual violence form the overall level of traumatization of the child, which affects the risk of addiction. Referring to the mediation model of self-compassion, scientists prove the correlation between childhood trauma, self-compassion, and the tendency to addiction. It is illustrated that the emotional and physical pain caused by psychotrauma reduces the emotional sensitivity of the individual to himself. Accordingly, directly trauma and a low level of self-sensitivity provoke the use of destructive self-help strategies, such as psychoactive substances. Thus, this study emphasizes the importance of developing self-compassion as a key factor in reducing the negative consequences of childhood trauma and restoring the psychological well-being of adults.

Analyzing the long-term consequences of early childhood trauma, S. Sudarsanan, N. Nakul [Sudarsanan et al., 2025] describe the determining factors of the formation of personality disorders in adulthood. Scientists have found that there is a specific influence of various traumatic events on the emergence of personality pathology. The first cluster includes antisocial, borderline, hysterical, narcissistic disorders, which are more often associated with a history of emotional and physical violence in childhood. The second cluster combines anxiety, obsessive-compulsive and dependent disorders that arise as a result of emotional neglect by significant adults. In contrast, a weak relationship between schizotypal and paranoid disorders in individuals with adverse childhood experiences has been proven. We see the researchers' confirmation that the frequency and severity of traumatic experiences in childhood increases the risk of psychopathology in adulthood as important results. This highlights the need for early screening for childhood trauma during psychological examinations to prevent mental health in adult society.

Within the framework of family psychology, it is advisable to pay attention to family dynamics, which are a critical factor in the emergence or processing of psychological trauma in childhood. The quality of the emotional family climate, methods of interaction, the presence or absence of support form the child's internal strategies for responding to stress and pain. Analyzing destructive family dynamics as a source of trauma, R. Mitra [Mitra, 2024] notes that ignoring or normalizing pain by other family members leads to deep emotional isolation and negative self-perception. In turn, the psychological recovery of a child after trauma also lies in the family plane [Carr, 2018]. Family support acts as a protective space that can mitigate the long-term consequences of childhood trauma. Emotional recognition from relatives, building a safe environment, emotional support enhances motivation for self-healing.

Summarizing the analyzed provisions, we conclude that the psychological well-being of an adult is critically important in the process of recovery from childhood trauma. Adults who were traumatized in childhood often show a reduced level of self-esteem, emotional stability and social support. The deficit of internal harmony leads to the formation of persistent negative thought patterns (for example, "I am unworthy of love", "The world is dangerous"). In turn, such an imbalance is accompanied by avoidance of help, self-blame, difficulties in reflecting on traumatic experiences. Referring to scientific research [Bhati & Dutt, 2025], there is an axiom that psychological well-being is not only a state, but also an active internal resource that contributes to resilience to psychotraumatic influences in adulthood. Scientists emphasize that resilience is formed through the experience of support, safety, and adaptive capacity. Accordingly, the ability to self-compassion, seek support, strengthen self-worth, and positive self-perception creates the conditions for healing.

Conclusions. Thus, the results of the theoretical analysis indicate that the phenomenon of childhood trauma has a deep and multidimensional significance for understanding the mental functioning of an adult personality. It has been determined that childhood trauma has long-term consequences not only for psychological but also for physical health. Traumatic experiences experienced in childhood include such forms of negative impact as emotional, physical, sexual violence and emotional deprivation. These factors, according to scientific sources, cause an increased risk of developing personality pathology, emotional regulation disorders, psychosomatic symptoms, anxiety and depressive disorders. It has been found that the consequences of early traumatization affect the level of self-esteem, the quality of interpersonal relationships, provoke avoidance of help, and form negative attitudes about oneself and the world. Within the framework of adult life, this is manifested in a tendency to destructive forms of behavior, in particular, abuse of psychoactive substances, and a feeling of inner emptiness. Knowledge of the main principles of the functioning of childhood trauma allows us to better understand the psychological well-being of an adult personality and their level of resilience.

The prospects of the research lie in the in-depth study of childhood trauma and psychological functioning of adults. Special attention should be paid to effective strategies for preventing childhood trauma and optimizing the psychological well-being of an adult personality, taking into account individual resources, family context and social environment.

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