

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH TATTOOING: SOME SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Although there are no statistics on tattoo prevalence in Ukraine, observation expressly reveals that tattoos are rising in popularity, in particularly in adolescents. The study aims at determining reasons for getting tattooed in young people.

Tattooing has evolved from the art of the primitive and outlaws to the fashion mainstream. In primitive societies, tattoos were indelible marks of tribe or of status and signified a difficult passage to adulthood or identified the owner's skills. In modern societies tattoos are generally regarded as forms of individual expression and creativity. But while tattoos glorify self-expression, they still identify tattooed individuals as members of a tribe – the community of those who worship body art.

One of the most popular reasons for getting tattooed is to adorn the body [1, p. 83]. Tattoos can also manifest rebellion and independence from adults. The latter reason for getting tattooed is especially common among teenagers and adolescents. When seeking to assert independence, young people may regard tattoos as a way to rebel against and reject authority figures and mainstream values, or to ground a sense of self in an unsecure world. Tattoos can be a means by which a young generation can commemorate the important events of their lives. In getting tattooed a lot of young people can be inspired by numerous celebrities, musicians, sportsmen who have visible tattoos. While some individuals perceive tattooing as a means of individualization, tattoos have themselves become a mass consumed commodity.

Men are more likely to use tattoos to reinforce traditional notions of masculinity, whereas women traditionally both defy and reproduce conventional standards of femininity [2].

To understand reasons for getting tattooed a survey was conducted among the university students. The sample was represented by 37 students of ages ranged from 17 to 25. The questionnaire included 15 Likert scale-based questions. The statistical analysis of the data obtained revealed that the main reasons for getting tattooed in adolescents are identity (4,75), fashion (4,05), art (3,75) and group affiliation (2,83).

However, the message that a person intends to communicate through tattoo is not always the message received by others [3, p. 91]. Despite their increasing popularity, tattoos still carry stigma and can provoke discrimination. Tattooed individuals can be mistakenly perceived as gang members, drug users or troublemakers. Tattoos can also create tension in interpersonal relations.

Thus, for adolescents tattoos serve as a means to express themselves through the appearance of their bodies. The tattooed body is a kind of canvas to depict a struggle between conformity and resistance, superiority and inferiority, individualism and collectivism. Tattoos are powerful vehicles of self-expression, commemoration, community affiliation and social commentary. At the same time, tattoos can be limited by

misinterpretation and stigmas attached to tattooed young people. Among the main reasons for getting tattooed adolescents name identity, fashion, art and group affiliation.

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