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FEATURES OF MEANINGFUL ORIENTATIONS OF STUDENT ACTIVISTS AS A COMPONENT OF HARDINESS

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Abstract

The article describes a study of meaningful orientations features among student activists with a high level of involvement as a component of hardiness. In modern science there are no well-founded approaches to involving students into the activities of student self-government bodies, no systematic description of factors contributing to student self-government involvement, no uniform methodological field for their study.

The article deals with the following issues a: peculiarities of meaningful orientations and involvement as a component of students' hardiness, features of meaningful orientations of student activists with different levels of involvement. The aim of the study is to reveal the specific features of the meaningful orientations of student activists with a high level of involvement. Students from 15 Russian universities took part in the research. The sample included 142 people: 51 activists and 91 nonactivists.

The study used a meaningful orientation test, which is an adapted version of the Purpose in Life Test by J. Crumbaugh and L. Maholick, and a resilience test, which is an adaptation of S. Maddi's "Hardiness Survey" questionnaire. We applied the following methods of mathematical statistics: descriptive statistics, Student t test, Mann-Whitney U test, cluster analysis, discriminant analysis. The results of the research show that students who take an active part in student self-management have a number of features concerning their meaningful orientations and resilience. Belonging to groups of students who are or are not activists of student government is determined by the degree of involvement as a component of resilience.

1. Introduction

Student self-government should be considered as a kind of social management, a special form of active, independent, relatively autonomous activity of students. Their inclusion in the processes of adoption and practical implementation of managerial decisions on student life, in the course of self-government students realize their needs and interests. Today, the problem of organizing it on the ground is particularly topical, and a wide range of studies of student self-government is conducted. In modern psychological and pedagogical literature, student self-government is viewed as a social phenomenon, a social institution (Balandina, 2007; Ovchinnikov, 2007; Pomelova, 2006; Timermanis, 2006), as a factor of development of leadership qualities (Shafeeva, 2011) and becoming a future specialist (Garbuzova, 2009; Kolmogorova, 2007). In the context of the problems analyzed, historical aspects and lessons for the present are studied (Akinshina, 2014), general theoretical bases of self-government development in educational institutions are analyzed (Timermanis, 2006, etc.) The essence, specificity and content of the formation of school and student self-government are revealed; organizational forms of student self-government are studied.

In order to organize student government effectively, it is necessary to study personality characteristics of young people participating in student self-government, including their meaningful orientations, hardiness and involvement.

Complication of social, economic, political and other systems creates many perspectives, a young man faces the world of constant choice, where he must decide on his own who he is. Information flows are growing so wide that the modern youth is forced to move from information search as a form of self-development to its selection. Accordingly, a person must take responsibility for everything that happens and will happen to him, and act in a situation of uncertainty.

2. Problem Statement

The historical function of student self-government is to solve urgent problems and questions of all students in the university in all aspects of educational and extracurricular activities. However, in practice, the work of student government is not always systematic, is of a disparate nature and often boils down to the organization of entertainment and sports events. Other important aspects of student life are ignored. In fact, the work of self-government activists is somewhat isolated and self-contained and has little effect on the educational organization as a whole.

In our opinion, this is due to the fact that, to date, there is no scientifically substantiated approaches to involving students into the activities of student self-government bodies, there is no systematic description of the factors contributing to student self-government involvement, there is no single methodological method for studying them.

In modern psychology, the concept of involvement is found, mainly, in the psychology of management. Involvement is defined as an indicator of the relationship "organization-employee" (Egorova, 2014). At the same time, the employee is ready to carry out actions that may go beyond the scope of his functions, and also work for the company as long as possible, which is due to the coincidence of the values of the employee and the organization.

The concept of involvement is close in content to the concept of "experiencing the flow" – a state of high activity and absorption, involvement in the task. Csikszentmihalyi describes it as "the holistic feeling experienced by people when they completely devote themselves to their activities" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2012).

Involvement is also seen as one of the parameters of hardiness – a concept proposed by S. Maddi and S. Kobasa (Kobasa, 1979; Maddi, 1984). According to these studies, the main reason for viability is the "activity-passivity" feature. Largely due to the activity "a person is able to understand that in the course of his life he makes decisions that affect his life". In addition to involvement, hardiness includes relatively autonomous components: control and acceptance of risk.

In the context of this study, "involvement" is the conviction of a young person that inclusion in student government gives the maximum chance to find something worthwhile and interesting for the individual.

3. Research Questions

3.1. Features of the meaningful orientations of students who do not take part in student self-government.

3.2. Features of hardiness and involvement as a component of the hardiness of those students who take and do not take part in student self-government.

3.3. Predictors of students' affiliation to groups, different in the degree of student activity.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify features of meaningful orientations of student activists with different levels of involvement.

5. Research Methods

Students of 15 Russian universities took part in the study. The sample includes 142 people: 51 students actively participate in student self-government (activists), the number of remaining students is 91. The study used a meaningful orientation test, which is an adapted version of the Purpose in Life Test test by J. Crumbaugh and L. Maholick, and a hardiness test, which is an adaptation of the S. Maddi's "Hardiness Survey" questionnaire.

The study used the following methods of mathematical statistics: descriptive statistics, Student t test, Mann-Whitney U test, cluster analysis, discriminant analysis.

6. Findings

The results of diagnostics of students who take and do not take part in student self-government, according to the methods "Meaningful Orientation" by Leontiev and "Test of Hardiness" by Maddi, were processed using the t-Student test. Table 1 shows the results of comparison of the indicators of hardiness in ordinary students and student activists by the t-Student test.

Table 01. The results of a Comparative Analysis of Hardiness Indicators by the t-Student Test

	Average Values		t	p
	Activists	**Ordinary**		
Total Hardiness	100,8	86,8	4,484	<0,001
Involvement	44,3	36,7	5,550	<0,001
Control	35	31	3,214	0,002
Acceptance of Risk	21,4	19,2	2,679	0,008

For all indicators of hardiness, the "Involvement", "Control" and "Risk Taking" revealed significant differences between groups of activists and ordinary students ($p < 0.01$). Consequently, students participating in student self-government are more convinced that their involvement in public activity gives them "the greatest chance to find something worthwhile and interesting for the individual". The analysis of the average values showed that the student activists have a more developed component of involvement. This means that they enjoy their own activities, the very process of inclusion in them.

The value of the hardiness indicator of "Control" among student activists also significantly exceeds this value for the sample of ordinary students, which allows us to assume that it is more typical for the student activists to be convinced that the struggle allows them to influence the outcome of the event, even if this influence is not absolute and success is not guaranteed. Activist students are more likely to feel that they choose their own activities, their own way, the direction for the realization of their abilities and needs.

The difference in the indicators of "Acceptance of Risk" suggests that the student activists have a more pronounced conviction that everything that happens to them contributes to their development due to the knowledge extracted from the experience, both positive and negative. For student activists, the perception of life in general and participation in public activities as a way of gaining experience is more characteristic, for them there is a willingness to act, to participate in projects even if there is no guarantee of success, at their own peril and risk; they think that desire for simple comfort and security impoverishes the life of the individual. At the heart of risk taking in this context is the idea of developing through the active assimilation of knowledge from experience and its subsequent use.

In both groups of respondents, among student activists and ordinary students, the average value of the "risk acceptance" parameter exceeds the normative values, that is, it is high. Thus, we can say that the groups of respondents that we survey as a whole view life as a way of gaining experience and are most probably ready to act even if there are no reliable guarantees of success, at their own peril and risk.

Thus, it can be stated that on average:

• student activists outperform ordinary students in all indicators of hardiness;

• students who actively participate in student self-government have higher levels of hardiness, especially as for the components of involvement and risk taking.

Further, we compared the results of the diagnosis of student activists and students who did not take part in student self-government, using the method of meaningful orientations. Table 2 shows the results of comparing the studied indices of meaningful orientations in ordinary students and student activists by the t-Student test.

Table 02. The Results of Comparison of the Indicators of Meaningful Orientations among Ordinary Students and Student Activists by the Criterion of t-Student Test

	Average Values		t	p
	Activists	**Activists**		
The General Indicator of the Meaningfulness of Life	117	106,7	3,629	<0,001
Goals in Life	34	31,6	2,123	0,035
Process of Life	36	32,1	4,187	<0,001
Productivity of Life	29,5	26,9	3,067	0,003
Control Locus – I	23,8	21	3,645	<0,001
Control Locus - Life	35,2	32,8	2,522	0,013

In all the indicators of the test "Meaningful Orientations" the groups of student activists and ordinary students demonstrated significant differences, too. Students activists significantly differ from ordinary students ($p \leq 0,01$) in the indicators of the test "Process", "Result", "Control Locus - I", which suggests that student activists are more eager for emotional, busy life . Student activists are also more satisfied with their lives and the activities they are involved in, find them more productive and meaningful. It can be stated that student activists feel more like the "masters" of their lives, they are more intrinsic in the idea of themselves as a strong person with sufficient freedom of choice, and active participation in social activities, in university self-government is one of the opportunities to build one's life in accordance with their goals and their perceptions of its meaning.

The indicators of the meaningfulness of life "Purpose" and "Locus of Control - Life" also significantly differ ($p \leq 0,05$) in student activists and ordinary students. This indicates that for student activists it is more characteristic to have goals in the future that give their lives meaningfulness, direction and time perspective. They also have a more pronounced sense of controllability of life. Participating in student self-government activities, they realize the opportunity to control their own lives, freely make decisions and implement them.

Thus, the results of the research conducted allow us to draw the conclusion that successful functioning in the sphere of student self-government is carried out on the basis of the meaning that the person attaches to this activity. It is during the student's time that a consistent, noncontradictory system of meaningful orientations is formed, on the basis of which successful self-realization of a person occurs.

Meaningful orientations are psychological prerequisites for entering an independent, adult life, therefore, during the student's time, a person particularly needs some formed voluntary activity, for successful functioning not only in the educational, but also in public life.

At the next stage, discriminant analysis was carried out to identify the factors influencing the distribution of students to groups of student self-government activists and students not participating in student self-government. We considered the diagnosed variables of involvement in S. Maddi's viability test ("Involvement", "Control" and "Risk Acceptance") and the meaningfulness of life in the "Meaningful Orientations" test ("Purpose", "Process", "Result", " "The Locus of Control - I" and "The Locus of Control - Life") as criteria and the subject's reliance on a group of student activists or ordinary students (Table 3) as a grouping feature.

Table 03. The Results of Discriminant Analysis (stepwise method)

Steps	Indicators	Wilks's Lambda	F	p
1	Involvement	0,820	30,8	<0,001

The results of the discriminant analysis (stepwise method) allowed us to find a single factor that reliably determines the status of the subjects to the different degree of student activity groups: involvement.

Then, using cluster analysis (clustering by K-means), the tested student activists (51 people) were divided into two groups according to the degree of the involvement: those who are involved and less involved. The group of involved student activists includes 38 people, the group of those not involved consists of 13 people.

According to the U-Mann-Whitney test, we revealed differences between the student self-government activists involved and those not involved in the indicators of meaningful orientations.

Statistically significant differences were obtained for all the indicators of meaningful orientations: the general indicator of the meaningfulness of life, the goal, the process, the result, the locus of control - I, the control locus of life (Table 4).

Table 04. Reliability of Differences in the Indicators of Meaningful Orientations between Those Involved and Those Not Involved in Student Self-Government Activists

Indicators	Average Rank		U	p
	Involved	Not Involved		
The General Indicator of the Meaningfulness of Life	31,12	11,04	52,5	<0,001
Goals in Life	31,2	10,81	49,5	<0,001
Process of Life	29,84	14,77	101,0	<0,001
Productivity of Life	30,08	14,08	92,0	0,001
Control Locus – I	30,42	13,08	79,0	<0,001
Control Locus - Life	29,62	15,42	109,5	0,003

As the comparative analysis has shown, the involved student activists who enjoy the activities they are involved in are significantly different from the less involved activists by the presence of goals in the

future that give life meaningfulness, direction. For them, participating in student self-government is not just an activity in which "today's" needs are met, but rather an opportunity to build a temporary perspective.

The activists involved in the students perceive life as interesting and emotionally saturated, filled with meaning. For such students, it is true that the only meaning of life is to live.

Student activists who perceive the inclusion in the process of self-management as the maximum chance to find something worthwhile and interesting for their personality feel their life productive and meaningful.

For the students involved in the student self-government, more than for the less involved student activists, it is characteristic to consider themselves as strong people with freedom of choice sufficient to build their life in accordance with their goals and perceptions of its meaning. Such students are convinced that everybody controls his own life, freely makes decisions and implements them. They are ready to participate in the development and implementation of various projects, as they are convinced that they can choose their future.

7. Conclusion

The study identifies the characteristics of student activists with a high level of involvement, describes the features of meaningful orientations and hardiness of the students who are involved and not involved in the activities of student government. Thus, it is possible to take into consideration the characteristics and expectations of the activists of student self-government and build educational work in the university so that it would give the maximum possible personal and social effect. It is found out that involvement is a predictor of students' belonging to groups that are different in the degree of student activity.

The results and conclusions of the research can be used in the practical activities of the management of higher education institutions, heads of departments of educational work, leaders of student associations.

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