

## PSYRGGU 2020

### Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

# CONFLICT BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND ASPIRATIONS RELATED TO PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF ADOLESCENTS

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### *Abstract*

Concerns around the psychological wellbeing of young people, and the factors affecting it are relevant to modern science. Among the factors with psychological wellbeing, researchers call intrapersonal conflicts. A relatively small number of studies are devoted to the study of conflicts between self-esteem and aspirations, and their role in regulating the psychological wellbeing of young people is not fully established. Research goals: to study the correlation between the conflicts of self-esteem and aspirations, as well as their relationship to the psychological wellbeing of adolescents. Methods: «Scale of psychological wellbeing» K. Ryff as adapted by L.V. Zhukovskaya, E.G. Troshikhina, «Satisfaction with Life Scale" E.D. Diener, «Dembo-Rubinstein Scale of self-esteem and level of aspirations», version by A.M. Prikhozhan. The sample 237 pupils aged 15-18 years. The conflict between self-esteem and aspirations is revealed in 52% respondents. The primary conflict concerns the imbalance between a high level of aspirations and a moderate level of self-esteem of different facets of one's personality. The significance of the difference between self-esteem and the level of aspirations is related to psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction, even in respondents who do not reach this level of conflict. When there is an explicit conflict, the number of negative relationships increases, which is an indicator of the negative impact of self-esteem conflict on all parameters of psychological wellbeing. The specific character of changes in psychological wellbeing associated with gender and intensity of conflicts is revealed. The most significant conflicts are in the sphere of self-confidence, appearance, and authority among peers.

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**Keywords:** Adolescent, level of aspirations, life satisfaction, psychological wellbeing, self-esteem.



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## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is a difficult period in the life of a maturing person. Psychologically, this age is highly contradictory. It is characterized by significant disproportions in the level and pace of development of the organism and personality, change in the social development status and expanding range of social roles. The adolescent's personality shapes his or her self-consciousness and reflexion and establishes a system of values and goals. At this age, the importance of self-esteem grows. Self-esteem is based on determining one's own skills, actions, qualities, motives and goals of one's behaviour, awareness of them and one's attitude towards them. There are many factors that affect the development of self-esteem: size of the family, order of precedence among children, parents' attitude, position among peers, attitude of teachers, etc. (Tolstykh, 2015).

## 2. Problem Statement

The interdependence between different aspects of self-esteem and psychological wellbeing has been revealed in a number of studies. The approaches to psychological wellbeing differ, however. It might be viewed in the context of emotional health and ability to control emotions (Bradburn, 1969), or as an integral indicator of the experience of successful performance (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Ryff (1989) conceptualizes it as a complex of personal characteristics contributing to the positive performance and achievements of an individual. Along with psychological wellbeing, the authors consider subjective wellbeing, including the integral assessment of an individual's self and life (Diener et al., 2003; Shamionov, 2004, etc.).

Both self-esteem and psychological wellbeing play a significant role in the formation and development of personality in adolescence. Researchers have identified correlations between self-esteem and optimism (Tagay, 2017), and personal identity (Isiklar, 2012). It was found that inadequate self-esteem and aspirations can act as predictors of aggression, anxiety, frustration, personal discomfort, and lower success (Bukhalenkova & Karabanova, 2018; Isiklar, 2012; Paradise & Michael, 2002; Vodyakha & Vodyakha, 2019). There is a direct correlation between positive self-esteem, self-acceptance and psychological wellbeing. At the same time, low morale, heightened anxiety, and negative self-esteem correlate with psychological wellbeing disorder (Kozmina, 2013; Nima et al., 2012). A number of studies show that there are gender differences in the structure of psychological wellbeing. Girls are more likely to have positive relationships with others, formed life goals, and skills to manage their environment, while young men are more likely to have higher levels of self-acceptance (Potasheva & Gaisenok, 2016).

Among other factors affecting self-esteem and psychological wellbeing, researchers mention social interaction skills, positive relationships with parents, peers and teachers (Oldfield et al., 2016; Riggio et al., 1990).

It is important to note that adolescents tend to be guided by ideal self-esteem, which reflects their level of aspirations. The gap between ideal and real self-esteem is often a traumatic factor.

## 3. Research Questions

Research has thus accumulated a wealth of knowledge on self-esteem and its role in the personal development of young people. At the same time there is insufficient research into the conflict between self

esteem and aspirations, their influence on psychological wellbeing in the teenage and youth period, and gender specificity of these indicators.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the conflict correlation between self-esteem and aspirations, and their relationship to psychological wellbeing in young men and women.

Participants:

237 pupils of St Petersburg schools and gymnasiums aged 15-18 years (99 young men and 138 girls).

#### **5. Research Methods**

Research methods include Ryff's Scales of psychological wellbeing in adaptation by Zhukovskaya and Troshikhina (2011), «Satisfaction with Life Scale – SWLS» E.D. Diener (as cited in Osin & Leont'ev, 2008), «Dembo-Rubinstein Scale of self-esteem and level of aspirations» (version by A.M. Prikhozhan) (as cited in Golovey et al., 2017).

#### **6. Findings**

Analysis of the data demonstrated that the general level of psychological wellbeing ( $M = 188.83$ ;  $\sigma = 20.01$  in young men;  $M = 185.3$ ;  $\sigma = 21.9$  in girls) and life satisfaction ( $M = 23.46$ ;  $\sigma = 6.66$  in young men;  $M = 22.26$ ;  $\sigma = 6.6$  in girls) correspond to standard values. The analysis revealed no significant differences between young men and girls by the Student's t-criterion.

Self-esteem indicators (65.12 p. for young men, 58.6 p. for girls) and level of claims - (86.82 p., 83.28 p. for young men and girls, respectively) also correspond to average statistical values with high individual variation from 0 to 100 p. and a tendency to lower values for girls.

The next step of the analysis was to identify groups based on the presence/absence of conflict of self-esteem and expectations (CSR). According to the Dembo-Rubinstein interpretation, an indicator of the conflict is the difference in aspiration and self-esteem values of less than 8 or more than 22 p. According to this indicator, the sample was divided into three groups: the first group included respondents whose CSR is not significant (48% of the sample, the difference between the level of aspirations and self-assessment is between 8 and 22 p.). The second group of respondents had expressed CSR (48% of the sample, the difference between the aspirations and self-assessment ranges from 8 to 22 p.). The number of young men and girls in these groups was approximately equal. The third group (4%) consisted of young men and girls with the difference between aspirations and self-esteem of less than 8 p. These groups differ in the way the conflict is manifested. In the first group, there is no evidence of conflict. In the second group, the most common conflict is observed between the aspiration for high achievements and a relatively low assessment of one's abilities. Representatives of the third group demonstrate a rare conflict with lower aspirations and higher self-esteem. As the number of people in the 3rd group is small (10), it was excluded from further analysis.

As it can be seen from Table 1, no significant differences between groups 1 and 2 have been observed in the indicators of psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction.

**Table 01.** Life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing in groups of young men and girls with different types of CSR

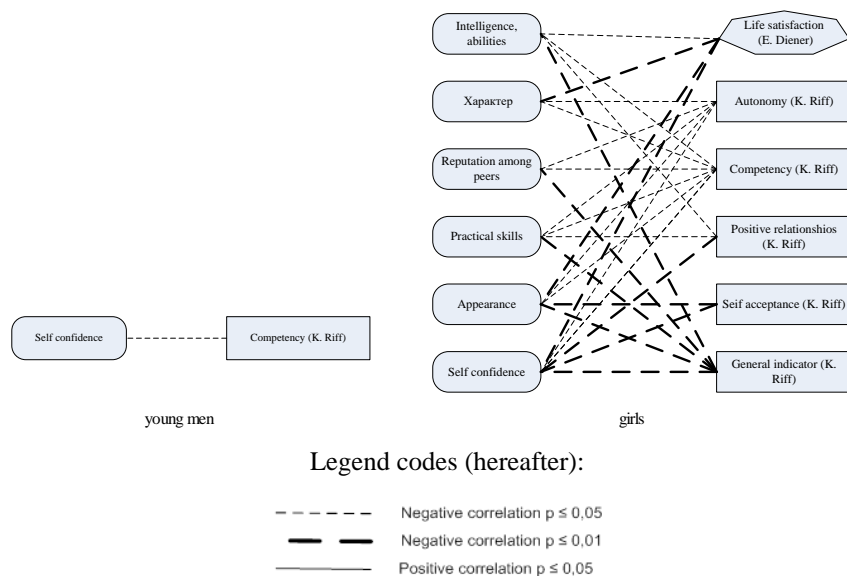
Group		Life-satisfaction	Autonomy	Competency	Personal growth	Positive relations	Life-goals	Self-acceptance	General indicator of psychological wellbeing
No conflict. Group 1	Young men	<b>25.27</b>	32.10	29.67	33.33	30.97	32.30	<b>32.57</b>	186.03
	Girls	<b>21.94</b>	29.20	27.54	34.06	33.01	31.34	<b>28.34</b>	183.49
Evident conflict Group 2	Young men	22.40	33.22	29.36	32.90	29.71	30.86	30.97	187.02
	Girls	22.75	31.51	28.09	34.49	32.07	32.47	31.20	188.02

However, there are differences between young men and girls within the first group: young men show higher rates of self-acceptance ( $p = 0.016$ ) and life satisfaction ( $p = 0.05$ ).

The study has revealed specific correlations of psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction with the indicators showing the difference between aspirations and self-assessment depending on the presence/absence of conflict and the gender of respondents.

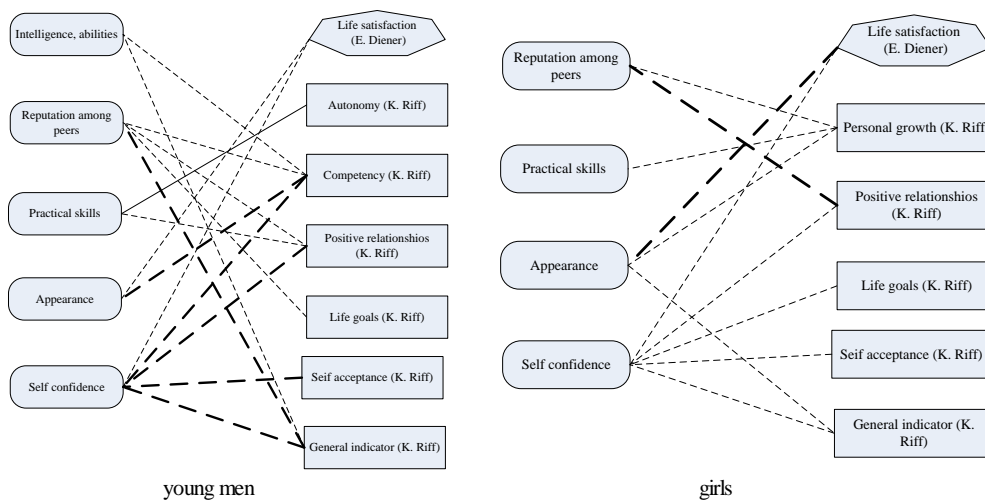
Young men of the first group have revealed only one correlation: the difference in self-confidence and self-assessment is negatively related to competence, i.e. when competence decreases, CSR increases.

Among the girls of this group, psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction developed numerous interrelationships with the difference between aspirations and self-assessment. The largest number of connections have been revealed between CSR "looks" and "self-confidence" (5 and 6 connections,  $p \leq 0.01$ ). CSR "mind", "character", "appearance", "self-confidence" correlate with life satisfaction (4 connections). "Autonomy" and "competence" (5 and 6 connections, respectively) are the most interconnected with CSR. Among indicators of CSR in young men and girls, self-confidence is the most related to psychological wellbeing, i.e. the less CSR in terms of self-confidence, the higher is psychological wellbeing (Fig. 1).



**Figure 01.** The correlation between the difference between claims and self-assessment and psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction (Group1)

In the second group, most indicators of psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction also show negative correlation with CSR. It means that CSR entails a decrease in the level of psychological and subjective wellbeing. At the same time, young men have significantly more correlations than girls. The CSR indicators of "appearance" and "self-confidence" (6 and 7 correlations, respectively) were found to be the most significant for the level of life satisfaction among both young men and girls. However, young men revealed one positive correlation - between CSR in practical skills and autonomy, which means that increased autonomy is associated with increased CSR in practical skills (Fig. 2).



**Figure 02.** Correlation between CSR and psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction (Group 2)

## 7. Conclusion

The analysis of descriptive statistical data has revealed that the self-esteem indicators of senior teenagers are within the average. This suggests that elder teenagers are capable of realistic and adequate self-assessment, in line with modern research results (Kuzmina & Kuzmina, 2018). The indicators of psychological and subjective wellbeing generally reflect a favorable scenario of development (Golovey & Danilova, 2019; Gómez-López et al., 2019). Yet, they show considerable variation, where average values do not reflect the individual characteristics of growing up. CSR may have a negative impact on psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction. The survey revealed CSR in 52% of respondents. The main type of CSR is a combination of high aspirations and a moderate level of self-assessment of various aspects of one's personality. It is indicative that the difference between the aspiration and self-assessment is interrelated with psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction even in those respondents who do not demonstrate this level of conflict (Group 1). In both groups, with expressed CSR (Group 2) and in the group with low or no indication of CSR (Group 1), there is a large number of interrelationships, indicating that an increased difference between aspirations and self-assessment is associated with a decrease in psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction. This is partly consistent with the results of other studies (Kozmina, 2013; Nissim et al., 2013), which revealed negative correlations between self-assessment and psychological wellbeing and personality traits. The results of this research suggest that psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction are not only related to self-assessment, but also to the degree of the difference

between aspirations and self-assessment. The nature of these relationships varies depending on the degree of CSR and gender. When the difference between aspiration and self-assessment is relatively low and there is no conflict, it is only the indicator of self-confidence that is significant for the psychological wellbeing of young men. With an increase in CSR among young men, there is a closer correlation between psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction. There are manifest connections between all indicators of psychological wellbeing, in particular, competence, autonomy, positive relations, and general indicator of psychological wellbeing. Among girls in a CSR situation, as CSR rises, the focus on personal growth, positive relations and the overall level of psychological wellbeing decreases most significantly.

Within the structure of correlation indicators for aspirations and self-assessment, the researchers have identified the most significant areas of integration with psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction. In young men, such spheres are self-confidence and authority among peers, and in girls, self-confidence and appearance. It allows us to speak about the importance of an adequate balance between self-assessment and aspirations in the above spheres in adolescents so that they could cope with external circumstances and life situations, and for their psychological wellbeing and satisfaction with life as a whole.

At the same time, one should not exclude the possibility of a bilateral impact, when the lowered level of psychological wellbeing and its individual components act as a factor strengthening the conflict in the sphere of self-assessment or, on the contrary, the expressed conflict between self-assessment and aspirations might reduce life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing. The results of the study indicate the significance of intra-personal conflicts, as exemplified by CSR, for the successful development and wellbeing of adolescents.

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