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FEATURES OF THE STUDENTS' PERSONALITY STRUCTURE
WITH AN OPTIMISTIC AND PESSIMISTIC ATTITUDE

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Abstract

This article discusses the development features of the students' personality with optimistic and pessimistic individuality traits. It examines the intra-level and interpersonal characteristics of the personality. The authors analyse a correlation of the inter-level relations between natural and socially conditioned ones. They revealed the image of a personality with a pessimistic attitude as an emphasis on the negative side of life, where people regard their goals as unattainable and refuse in advance to make any efforts for their implementation. The optimist is set on the positive side of being, sees the desired goals as achievable and continues to make efforts for the realization of these goals, even when progress is slow or difficult. The article highlights the philosophical orientation of the pessimistic and optimistic attitude of the personality. According to G. V. Leibniz, there is more good than evil in the world, so the image "this world is the best of all" is inherent in an optimistic-minded person, and according to A. Schopenhauer, the author of the theory of pessimism, "this world is the worst of all possible worlds" because it has more despondency, grief and suffering, this image is inherent in a pessimistic-minded person. The study diagnosed 23 properties using the following methods: the I questionnaire. Temperament Structure questionnaire (TSQ), and other methods for diagnosing the level of subjective control (LSC) of personality, K. Thomas' test were applied. The results of this research indicate that optimism and pessimism have a peculiar effect on the formation of individuality.

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1. Introduction

Scientific justification. An optimistic worldview as a psychological category is a very capacious and multi-valued concept. There is currently no clear definition of this concept in domestic psychology. In everyday life, optimism most often means such qualities of a person as invigoration, cheerfulness, love of life and a sense of humor. The philosophical dictionary defines optimism and pessimism as concepts that characterize the value side of the worldview, in which the world is understood only in terms of the balance between good and evil, justice and injustice, happiness and disaster (Abonosimova, 2004). Based on Platonov's dynamic functional structure of the personality, optimism as a stable personal characteristic is closely related to its orientation and attitudes. Humanistic psychology considers optimism as a belief in human nature, in the unconditionally positive, kind and constructive essence of a person, laid down in the form of potential, which reveals under appropriate conditions. Optimism can also be considered as a system of personal views and attitudes towards one's life, the future, the people around one and oneself. Osgud noted in his writings that the greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives. Many phenomena of the inner world, mental states and processes depend on the features of the personal attitude system. In our opinion, optimism as a system of attitudes, assessments and worldview is an active life position of the personality that influences the choice of behaviour models, role stances and resilience to psychological stress. Optimism is a stable personal position of a person in relation to difficulties, based on the belief in success and the power of human nature (Aliphanova & Arskieva, 2016).

Literature review on the topic. In Russia, in the mid-70s of the 19th century, the interest in this issue became a matter of debate after the public became acquainted with the ethics of Schopenhauer (Schopenhauer, 1993). The polemic involved famous thinkers such as Grot, Strahov, Solovyov, Certelyov, Lavrov, Mokievskij, Leontev, Vvedenskij, Hvostov, Mechnikov and others. The common thread is the tendency to look for arguments in favour of positive thinking.

A significant contribution to the coverage of the optimism and pessimism issue was made by Zelingman, Abramson, Peterson, Karver and Schejer, Muddy (in the context of positive psychology), Abulhanova, Berezina, Sychev (in the context of the model of the personality's humanistic type as a subject of one's life path), Keselman, Matskevich, Muzdybaev (in the context of economic strategies of behaviour), Yusupov, Kapustina (as a certain type of attitude) and others (Arskieva, 2014)..

2. Problem Statement

The issue of optimism and pessimism has long captured the researchers' attention.

Optimism as a property of personality reflects the proportional development of all mental processes, provides a person with a cheerful world-outlook, faith in people, their strength and capabilities, confidence in the progress of society, faith in their own strength and capabilities as a subject of activity (Muzdybaev, 2003, p. 90).

“Pessimism is a gloomy attitude at which a person does not believe in the future, at which he or she is inclined to see the dull, bad, unpleasant in everything” (Ozhegov, 2005, p. 463). The first philosophical understanding of these concepts comes from the basic categories of good and evil, the purpose and meaning of life and happiness. In the most general form, the concepts of "optimism" and "pessimism" characterize a person's attitude to the conditions of his or her existence in the world. In this respect, emotional and rational levels capture the extent to which human needs can be met by present existences or future prospects. According to Leibniz, there is more good than evil in the world, so this world is the best of all. The famous author of the theory of pessimism, Schopenhauer, argued that "this world is the worst of all possible worlds" because it has more despondency, grief and suffering (Schopenhauer, 1993, p. 37). One of the main gaps in the study of optimism/pessimism is the question of objective and subjective determinations. Indeed, it is still not clear what type of determination is primary in the formation of a cheerful and gloomy attitude. Researches have shown that either pessimism (the Middle Ages) or optimism (the Renaissance and Enlightenment) dominated in different periods of the historical development of society in sociological terms. Moreover, it is noted that pessimistic mentalities are inherent in people precisely in the period of protracted wars, permanent social cataclysms or chronic economic crises that lead to disillusionment with the ideals of science and progress, the crisis of traditional religious values. And optimism invariably emerges with the stabilization of the social situation and the growth of the quality of people's life. Nevertheless, Muzdybaev's (2003) researches clearly showed that optimists' strategies for coping with economic insufficiency are rational and effective, while pessimists use mostly irrational, unproductive, passive strategies. Consequently, even in conditions of large-scale socio-economic changes, the degree of adaptation to changing conditions depends on the subject's property, in essence, personal attitude, disposition or opinions, mood, reflecting positive or negative expectations about specific events or the future as a whole. Thus, the assumption, that to be an optimist or a pessimist you must be in happy or unhappy circumstances, or that pessimism is the result of life's disappointments and upsets is a myth, becomes clear (Sychoy, 2008). Rather, on the contrary, due to optimism and pessimism as personality traits, a person can transform the surrounding reality with more or less success, which directly depends on a number of polar characteristics of these properties. Thus, optimists and pessimists differ in the pole of expectations in life (positive or negative), the prevailing mood, the presence or absence of will to overcome difficulties, faith in the best or worst, in yourself and your inner circle (Vinokurova et al., 2017). Thereby, we have a portrait of representatives of both attitudes. The optimist focuses on the positive side of being, sees the desired goals as achievable, and continues to make efforts to achieve these goals, even when progress is slow or difficult. Pessimists, who focus on the negative side of life, find their goals unattainable and refuse in advance to make any efforts to achieve them. There are still a number of pressing questions that arise in considering the issue of optimism/pessimism that need to be addressed. For example: is there a dependence of these personality traits on the genetically determined ones? And vice versa: do optimism and pessimism affect the formation of other personality traits?

3. Research Questions

Our research subject was the development of the personality structure of students with pessimistic and optimistic attitudes.

4. Purpose of the Study

To solve the raised questions, we relied on the main provisions of the integral individuality theory, which is characterized by a systematic approach to the study of a human being, considering all the properties of individuality (both natural and socially conditioned) in mutual influence and interpenetration.

5. Research Methods

In the course of the research, we used the following methods: The Optimism Test allowed us to separate all the subjects into two polar groups: optimists and pessimists. Further, in both groups, we studied different levels of personality properties: the neurodynamic level (the level of the body); the psychodynamic level (temperament); the personal level and the socio-psychological level. The diagnosis was conducted under conditions of confidentiality – a necessary condition for creating a trusting atmosphere between the subjects and the experimenter. To prevent false, biased responses, the subjects were given abstract instruction on the methodology. In total, the study diagnosed 23 properties using the following methods: the I questionnaire. Strelau, Rusalov's Temperament Structure questionnaire (TSQ), Bazhin, Golyunkina, Etkind's methods for diagnosing the level of subjective control (LSC) of personality, Thomas' test "The research on the features of response in a conflict situation".

6. Findings

The next stage was the statistical processing of the data obtained to identify the features of the personality structures of both groups. In general, at all four levels of the personality structures of optimistic and pessimistic students, the mismatched diagnosis is 38 % (18 gradations out of 47), and the coinciding diagnosis is 62 %. Since the coinciding diagnosis dominates, we are forced to conclude that the people involved in the research are mostly similar to each other.

In contrast to the results of the diagnostic comparison of optimists and pessimists students by the criterion of coincidence-discrepancy (horizontal analysis), the results of the analysis by the criterion of proportionality-disproportionality (vertical analysis) show the predominance of disproportionate distribution of values according to the gradations of each indicator (optimists – 70 %, pessimists – 65 %), which denotes a significant variability of personality structures, a significant difference in them between groups.

To obtain more accurate results, we resorted to the Student's t-test, which showed that statistically significant differences in individual indicators of the properties of the four levels of the optimists' personalities and pessimists' personalities are observed in 3 cases out of 23 theoretically possible, which

is only 13 %. Thereby, the element-by-element analysis shows that there are no significant differences in the structures of optimists and pessimists.

The discriminant analysis, however, gives completely different results. The personality structures of optimists and pessimists differ significantly in terms of the neurodynamic, psychodynamic and personal levels, and the accuracy of calculations in all three cases reaches 100 %, since $p < 0.001$; and there were no significant differences in the indicators of the socio-psychological level.

Further integration of the indicators revealed the following: according to the integral indicator of the lowest levels of the groups under consideration, the optimists and pessimists' structures differ very highly, by 100 % ($p < 0.001$), which indicates the existence of completely different systems of correlated and uncorrelated properties of the neurodynamic and psychodynamic levels. In addition, optimists significantly outstrip pessimists in the average value of the integral indicator of the personality's lower levels. And for the integral indicator of the highest levels, significant differences in the average values also reach 100 % ($p < 0.001$), and the pessimists' group significantly outstrip the capabilities of the optimists' group in the formation of structures of integral individuality.

If the property discriminators of the socio-psychological level, taken separately, do not significantly differ in optimists and pessimists, but when their integration with the properties of the personal level results in the formation of different systems of correlated and uncorrelated properties, then, logically, the question arises: Is the activity of the properties of the personal level the reason for this, or are the relationships of the properties of the socio-psychological level still different in both groups and these differences prevent the uncorrelated properties from being identified? Only correlation and factor analyses can answer this question.

Statistical comparison of the optimists and pessimists' personality structures on the indicator of the four levels did not reveal any differences in general. In fact, we are faced with a phenomenon: differing at all levels, except for socio-psychological, in the values of personal indicators separately, lower and higher levels separately, by integrating all four levels, the structures of optimists and pessimists do not differ statistically significantly. The obtained fact leads to the idea that the identification of differences in structures is hindered by a system of uncorrelated properties, in particular the socio-psychological level, and then correlation and factor analysis will reveal differences. Either the personality structures of the optimists and the pessimists, indeed, differ only on a level basis, and the integral portrait of both is similar. More complex methods of mathematical and statistical apparatus will be able to confirm or disprove these assumptions.

Thus, an intra-level correlation analysis of the personality structures of each of the four levels separately allowed us to draw the following conclusions:

- the properties of the neurodynamic level of the structure of the optimists' integral personality are related to each other single-multi-valued (100 %) and form a single symptom complex of interrelated properties with a density of 83.3 %; pessimists – single-multi-valued (100 %) with a density of only 66.7 %. Density as an indicator reflects the development of the relationship system: the higher the density, the higher the compensatory capacity of the properties. Consequently, the indicators of different properties of the neurodynamic level are more cohesive and organized in the structure of the optimists' personality.

- the properties of the psychodynamic level of the optimists' personality form a coherent interconnected (directly or indirectly) system, the density of which is 75 %. By nature, all dependencies are single-multi-valued (100 %). However, they have an interesting feature. Emotionality (indicator 11) and social emotionality (indicator 12) in addition to being negatively correlated with each other, they also correlate inversely with all other properties, except indicator 8 (social plasticity). Based on the above, it turns out that with an increase in the values of indicators 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, the values of indicators 11 and 12-decrease and vice versa. This correlation feature of the psychodynamic level properties undoubtedly plays an important role in the formation of the structure of the optimists' personality. The density of the relationship between different indicators of different properties of the psychodynamic level in pessimists is much lower than in optimists (42.9 %). In the structure of the pessimists' personality, there is only single-multi-valued dependency (100 %), as well as in optimists. But since the total density of interrelations of the psychodynamic level properties in pessimists is 1.7 times lower than in optimists, then, accordingly, the structure of the personality of the latter is characterized by greater plasticity, and, accordingly, controllability in development.
- indicators of different properties of the optimists and pessimists' personal level correlate with each other only positively (density 80 %); interdependencies in both groups are single-multi-valued (100 %). Thereby, the optimists and pessimists' personality structures at the personal level are equally cohesive and organized.
- different indicators of different properties of the optimists' socio-psychological level, directly and indirectly, correlate with each other, forming a single symptom complex of properties with a density of 50 %, and in pessimists, the relationship is less dense (40 %). But by the nature of one-level relationships, the structures coincide: we find only single-multi-valued dependencies (100 %), and all the relationships are negative, inverse. Thereby, while the identity structures of the optimists and pessimists are similar in nature and direction of dependencies, the socio-psychological characteristics of the optimists are more harmonized and regularized, since density is 10 % higher, unlike the pessimists.

The inter-level correlation analysis of the optimists and pessimists' personality structures revealed the following features. The total number of inter-level correlations in the structure of optimists reaches 24, which is 12.4 % of the theoretically possible result. In addition, the polymorphic dependence responsible for the flexibility and plasticity of the structure, which is desirable for a developed individuality, is not represented in all scopes of the relationship properties, but only in the neuro-psychodynamic one.

And the total inter-level density of the structures of the pessimists' integral personality is 32.5 % (63 dependencies out of 194 theoretically possible). And since the inter-level density of connections in pessimists is observed in all three scopes of the relationship properties – neuro-psychodynamic, psychodynamic-personal and personal-socio-psychological, respectively, it exceeds 2.6 times the density of optimists (Arskieva, 2014).

7. Conclusion

We will conduct a comparative analysis of intra-level and inter-level correlations of both groups. Intra-level correlation analysis showed that at the neurodynamic (density 83.8 %), psychodynamic (75 %) and socio-psychological (50 %) levels, the structures of the optimists' integral personality are more organized and ordered in comparison with pessimists (66,7, 42,9, 40 %, respectively). And at the personal level, the density of addictions in both groups is the same (80 %). Further, in both groups, intra-level connections are only single-multi-valued, semi-rigid (Aliphanova & Arskieva, 2016).

As a result, we get very contradictory data: the structures of optimists are more developed at the intra-level and those of pessimists – at the inter-level. This inadvertently leads to the assumption that the personal constructs-optimism and pessimism-have a peculiar effect on the formation of personality: people who are set up for a positive attitude are quite weakly developed polymorphic dependencies to live in harmony with themselves and the surrounding world. People who see negative aspects in everything need a higher compensatory ability of the properties to adapt to the surrounding world and inner harmony.

Thereby, at this stage of the research, it is clear that optimism and pessimism have a significant influence on the formation of the personality structure.

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