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Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

PSYCHOLOGICAL SECURITY AND PERSONALITY BASIC VALUES

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Abstract

The state of the individual's psychological security greatly depends not only on objective reality but also on prevailing values of the subject of security himself, his subjective perception of reality. The study aimed to explore the value regulation of the subject's need for psychological security and the linkage between the person's need for psychological security and the perception of the self. The study was conducted in the territory of the Sverdlovsk region. The aggregate research sample consisted of residents of the 48 administrative and territorial units (districts and cities of the region). The authors used the following methods: the D. Peabody Semantic Differential adapted by A. G. Shmelyov; the S. Schwartz Value Survey adapted by O. A. Tikhomandritskaya and E. M. Dubovskaya; the Assessment of Need for Security Satisfaction questionnaire by O. Yu. Zotova. The findings indicated that satisfaction with the need for security relates to how the individual realizes and describes his self. In situations of lower security the person is prone to assess himself in terms of negative characteristics and maladaptive behavior, in situations of greater security – he tends to describe his self using positive features. Nevertheless, the question remains of which direction this link has. In other words, whether the state of insecurity provokes the individual's description in negative characteristics, or the proneness of the person to negative self-perception results in a sense of insecurity. The values of preservation and self-affirmation did not demonstrate a statistically significant impact on psychological security.

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Keywords: Basic individual values, psychological security, the need for security, 4-position model of personal trait.



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1. Introduction

Probable combinations of different factors of psychological security have stirred the interest in the dynamic of the process: adaptation, mechanisms of comparison that regulate psychological security, priorities of personal goals in line with the person's basic motives and values. Risks and threats accompany every person irrespective of the country he lives in or works (Hovden, 2004) and bear a global character. The events that happen in one place will have direct consequences in others (Beck, 1992; OECD, 2003; WCED, 1987). Psychological security is a state of personality when the individual can satisfy his/her basic needs for self-preservation and be aware of his/her own (psychological) security in society (Zotova, 2011a). Psychological security presents a coherent experience associated with basic human values and needs and expressed in a subjective sense of satisfaction with himself and his life. A specific subject appropriates, to a certain degree, general cultural space as a totality of images and, being viewed through his system of values, world outlook, it acquires a personal meaning that guides the subject's attitude to this reality. Thus, the state of psychological security greatly depends not only on objective reality but also on prevailing values of the subject of security himself, his subjective perception of reality. So, the unsatisfied need for security generates the transformation of the whole sphere of values and personality, and, conversely, such a motivational goal suppressed by the individual as stability, security, harmony in family and society and the person himself leads to the distortion of the entire structure of personality. "If the person feels safe he/she can perceive the same situation as a possibility to gain new experience. The person can be guided by not only a short-time goal but also the desire to transform the situation into a long-lasting positive experience. In this case, the individual will be able to fix his problems not avoid them" (Zotova & Tarasova, 2018, p. 231).

The individual recognizes the world through the prism of values, i.e. values determine the process of a person's cognizing of the social world (Andreeva, 2002; Tajfel & Fraser, 1978). The human perceiving and cognizing the world cannot be non-value-driven since it cannot be non-sense-bearing. Values regulate the social behaviour of people. They present some ultimate (ideal) goals the individual is striving for. They also give the opportunity to make a decision when choices should be made, activate and channel human behaviour and activity. In this function, values are realized in value orientations and constitute an element of the dispositional architecture of personality (Yadov, 1991). Value orientations guide and intervene in the process of the person's goals-setting (Dontsov, 1974; Zhukov, 1976), define characteristics and nature of the person/the world relationships, thus determining, to some extent, specific features of human behaviour (Kruglov, 1983). In other words, value orientations exercise mental regulation of the subject's social activity and behaviour in the social environment. It is next to impossible to name a period in the history of Russia when a man could feel fully secure. The environment has always harboured a multitude of threats. With the development of Russian society, its social and state systems, their types and intensity have changed lots of times. So, today a Russian finds himself at a crossroads of completely different groups of threats compared to those his ancestors faced three hundred years ago (Serov, 2013). In Yanitsky's (2003) opinion, "there is no consensus within Russian society concerning basic values and goals, nor is there a harmonized draft of a future...An underlying normative model of society – security, survival, preservation of the accumulated or acquired earlier" (p. 20).

2. Problem Statement

Although the number of research focused on psychological security has significantly increased, predictors of the person's satisfaction with the for psychological security in the sphere of value orientations have not been addressed so far.

3. Research Questions

The implementation of the study involved the following issues to be addressed:

1. How do the estimates of the self in persons with different satisfaction with the need for psychological security correlate? What characteristics do the given descriptions of the self have?
2. Is there an empirical link between the need for psychological security and the individual's value orientations? What values weigh very heavily on the person's satisfaction with the need for security?

4. Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to explore the value regulation of the subject's need for psychological security and the linkage between the person's need for psychological security and the perception of the self.

The attainment of the aim required addressing the following tasks:

1. To examine the substance of the self – perception in the respondents with different levels of satisfaction with the need for psychological security.
2. To compare the assessment component of the self-perceptions in the respondents with different levels of satisfaction with the need for psychological security.
3. To reveal predictors of satisfaction with the person's need for psychological security in the sphere of value orientations.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Subjects

The study was conducted in the territory of the Sverdlovsk region. The aggregate research sample consisted of residents of the 48 administrative and territorial units (districts and cities of the Sverdlovsk region). For the sample to be representative and exact in reflecting the general population – the structure of the population according to gender, age, and a type of settlement – each area frame sampling was defined based on the analysis of demographic indicators (data) published by the Federal State Statistics Service on the size and composition of the population as of 1 January 2019. The authors calculated the proportion of each group of the citizens (by age, gender, and a type of settlement). The quota sample of the Sverdlovsk region constituted 4840 subjects.

5.2. Measures and tools

The study was based on the approach forwarded by D. Peabody and named the Four-Pole Model of Personality Trait (Peabody, 1985) and adapted by Shmelyov (2002). The author proceeded from the assumption that the same traits have two simultaneously existing but different in their semantic components

(evaluative and descriptive). For each scale of the semantic differential, D. Peabody designed compensating scales in which connotative and denotative meanings were tied up oppositely (for instance, the scale thrifty – extravagant and the scale greedy – generous). In the modified by Shmelyov (2002) version of the given model named the Four-Position Model of Personality Trait, all four features that describe the manifestations of the same trait are located on one line, and evaluative positive traits are closer to the center (the golden mean), whereas evaluative negative traits are shifted towards the poles. If positively evaluative qualities are considered to be adaptive, their opposites – negatively evaluative – are seen as extremes indicating maladaptive behavior. In the course of the study the authors exploited the following measures:

- the D. Peabody Semantic Differential adapted by A. G. Shmelyov. The object of evaluation in the differential is “the self” (Shmelyov, 2002).
- the S. Schwartz Value Survey adapted by Tikhomandritskaya and Dubovskaya (1999).
- the Assessment of Need for Security Satisfaction questionnaire by Zotova (2011b).

The data obtained were processed with the help of descriptive statistics methods, the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient, the multiple regression analysis. To process and analyze the results the authors used the SPSS 20.0. package.

6. Findings

At the first stage of the analysis based on the data obtained in 48 administrative and territorial units of the Sverdlovsk region, the authors singled out the two groups of comparison: the group of the respondents with a high level of satisfaction with the need for security – group 1 (75-th percentile) and the group of the subjects with a low level of satisfaction with the need for security – group 2 (25-th percentile).

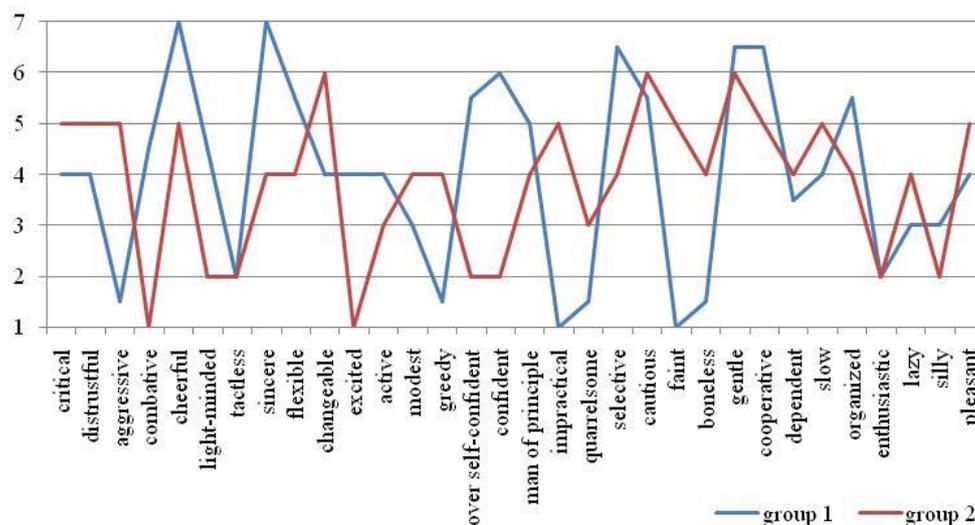


Figure 01. The profiles of the self – assessments produced by the respondents with different levels of satisfaction with the need for security (group 1 – the high level of satisfaction with the need for security; group 2 – the low level of satisfaction with the need for security)

The comparison profiles were built according to the median values of semantic differential assessments of each group (figure 01).

The results obtained demonstrated that the respondents with the high level of satisfaction with the need for security described themselves as peace-loving (2.5), cheerful (3.0), sincere (3.0), generous (2.5), confident (2.0), practical (3.0), forgiving (2.5), selective (2.5), courageous (3.0), manful (2.5), cooperating (2.5), and organized (1.5). The respondents with the low level of satisfaction with the need for security characterized themselves as critical (1.0), distrustful (1.0), passive (3.0), changeable (2.0), calm (3.0), impractical (1.0), cautious (2.0), gentle (2.0), slow (1.0), and intelligent (2.0). The deviations from the mean in bipolar scales towards the corresponding traits are given in brackets. The higher the degree of the deviation is, the stronger this or that trait is expressed.

Correlation of estimates of the two groups that carried out the self-assessment by all scales appeared to be statistically insignificant, and even negative ($r = -0.22$).

The comparative analysis of the evaluative component of perceptions of the self in the respondents with different levels of satisfaction with the need for security allows for concluding that the representatives with the high level of satisfaction with the need for security tend to describe themselves through a set of adaptive positively evaluative traits. By contrast, the subjects with the low level of satisfaction with the need for security use negative evaluative traits for self-definition. The given traits make up 50% of personality profiles (distrustful, passive, changeable, impractical, slow) and indicate maladaptive behavior.

Since it is value orientations that exercise semantic regulation of the individual's life one can assume that they act as predictors of the person's assessment of the degree of satisfaction with the need for psychological security. To check this assumption the authors conducted the multiple regression analysis (the technique – forced engagement) of the data of the aggregate sample. The following values or motivational types acted as the independent variables: self-regulation, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and self-orientation.

Table 01. The regression model of the dependent variable ‘Satisfaction with the need for security’

R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Predictors	β	t	p-value
0.222	0.204	6.807	Self-regulation	0.309	3.445	0.012
			Stimulation	-0.320	4.743	0.000
			Hedonism	-0.010	-0.134	0.893
			Achievement	0.051	0.589	0.556
			Power	0.017	0.312	0.755
			Security	0.025	0.330	0.742
			Conformity	0.168	1.910	0.057
			Tradition	-0.010	-0.118	0.906
			Benevolence	-0.045	-0.562	0.575
			Self-orientation	-0.076	-1.163	0.245

The generated model testifies to the fact that 20.4% of the variance of the variable ‘Satisfaction with the need for security’ is determined by the influence of the identified predictors. Table 01 shows that the essential predictors of the individual's satisfaction with the need for security are self-regulation and stimulation. And the first variable positively correlates with satisfaction with the need for security while the second one – inversely. In other words, the person's independent autonomous thinking and self-guidance contributes to an increase in his satisfaction with the need for security. A sense of purpose, wisdom, self-sufficiency, goal-orientedness, independent goal-setting are values whose presence in the

system of personality orientations gives rise to human sense of security. At the same time, the novelty and competition as life goals facilitate the reduction of satisfaction with the person's need for security. Freedom, creative activity, diverse life, broad outlook, courage, cheerfulness, and intellectual curiosity constitute those values that decrease a sense of security.

Therefore, this study demonstrates that it is value orientations reflecting the individual's openness to changes (self-regulation and stimulation) that largely affect the level of the person's satisfaction with the need for security. Such values as preservation, self-affirmation and going beyond one's self do not produce a significant direct impact on personality psychological security.

7. Conclusion

The conducted study allowed the authors to examine the psychological security and the associated with it phenomena not only at the declared level but at the in-depth levels as values presenting the subject-matter of this research perform a regulatory function exercising semantic regulation of man's life.

The findings showed that satisfaction with the need for security relates to the degree personality understands the self and describes it. In situations of lower security the person is prone to assess himself in terms of negative characteristics and maladaptive behavior, in situations of greater security – he tends to describe his self using positive features. However, it is still unclear which direction this link has. In other words, whether the state of insecurity provokes the individual's description in negative characteristics, or the proneness of the person to negative self-perception results in a sense of insecurity. The answer to this question can be found in the course of the experimental research where one person will be consistently studied in conditions of the perceived greater or lower security.

Besides, the given study revealed the impact of values reflecting the person's openness to changes on the level of satisfaction with the need for security. And if the person's can think and act independently and manage individual views (the value of self-regulation), this contributes to an increase in satisfaction with the need for security. By contrast, a strive for novelty, competition as a life goal (the value of stimulation) is likely to decrease satisfaction with the need for security. Values that should, in the first place, affect the need for security did not demonstrate any statistically significant impact. A further insight into the linkage between the degree of satisfaction with the person's need for security and his values seems to be very promising. The focus of this study will be on those values that are not declared at the level of normative ideals but at the level of individual priorities realized in practically performable behavior.

Nevertheless, studies into the need for security, internal personal factors that shape this need and its satisfaction remains a topical area of research since needs occupy a key position in behavior motivation and are initial determinants of the person's activity. It is the need as an experience of a contradiction between what is present and what is needed that encourages personality to actions directed towards deleting the given contradiction. Satisfaction with the need for security is not only a fundamental requirement of any healthy personality, social group, organization, state but also a condition necessary for personality development and the movement towards higher needs.

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