

EdCW 2020**International Scientific and Practical Conference Education in a Changing World: Global Challenges and National Priorities****LEADERSHIP SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL DIRECTION**

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Abstract

The article presents the possibilities of the Youth Workshop of Psychological Counselling in leadership skills development of students of psychological and pedagogical direction. Many students are not able to demonstrate social activity, take responsibility and initiative, conduct psychological training courses, that is, they do not show leadership skills. The question that arises is what are the psychological conditions that ensure the effective development of leadership skills of students of psychological and pedagogical direction. Thirty-three students participating in the YWPC took part in the study. The conditions for the implementation of this process are identified and substantiated. New targets of higher education require changes in the content and structure of psychologists' training. Training of students in higher education institutions should not only prepare them for research activity but also help to foster psychological readiness for professional activity in the education system. The modernization of the training system of psycho-pedagogical personnel requires the integration of science, education, and production. This article contains a comparative analysis of changes in the level of leadership skills development of students, provides data on the ascertaining and control stages of the experiment and describes the results of the experimental study. The results of the development and approbation of the training program aimed at developing leadership skills of students of psychological and pedagogical direction convinced of the program effectiveness and the positive dynamics of change in leadership skills and professional competence of future specialists.

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Keywords: Leadership, management psychology, leadership skills development, psychodiagnostics, student leaders, psychological training courses



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1. Introduction

The development of leadership skills and abilities at the present stage is the focus of attention of psychological science and practice. In all educational institutions, schools, colleges, technical schools, universities, the main goal is the preparation of specialists who are in demand and competitive in the labour market. The speed of change in the modern world places serious demands on leadership qualities of students of psychological and pedagogical direction. The competition is multiplied, and it becomes more difficult to meet the requirements of employers and exceed their expectations (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020; Jensen, 2017). A unified approach to defining leadership concept essence is yet to be established in science, but this does not lead to a reduction in demand for leadership skills of specialists of psychological and pedagogical direction. Leadership is a very significant skill of a modern psychological and pedagogical specialist for employers involved in the selection of candidates for this job (Kois et al., 2016, pp. 29-30). The most important qualities of a leader are the skills of design and change management, learning ability and interpersonal skills, teamwork skills and the ability to cooperate (Pearson et al., 2019).

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a consortium of education, business, media groups, and employers, is concerned that today's young people are not sufficiently prepared for professional work, their leadership skills are underdeveloped, they are unable to compete, which undermines the ability of the world economy to flourish. The overwhelming majority of employers interviewed (81%) indicated that leadership development is professionally important for young employees and is in short supply. Determining the level of leadership development of students of psychological and pedagogical direction can play a significant role in realistic self-perception (Yarnell & Grunberg, 2017). Astin and Astin (2000) claim that primitive ideas about leadership lead to limiting attitudes that discourage a student of psychological and pedagogical direction from participating in large events and gaining the necessary experience in group management and the implementation of psychological training courses. Leadership development programs should focus on instilling faith in students, and then the picture of the world expands, beliefs become functional, which allows the student to believe that they are in a position to influence, this is meaningful and valuable (Baccei, 2015). Such cognitive attitudes encourage students to act as leaders of various activities, which in turn is extrapolated to relationships within a family, with friends, and in the future professional performance of a psychologist (Kois et al., 2016, p. 31).

Combining various types of activities, communication, play, work, development, correction, training courses is an effective and targeted form of necessary leadership skills training of students of psychological and pedagogical direction. A modern psychologist should comply with world standards, meet the standard of a representative of the intellectual elite, fully possess managerial and leadership functions, be a brilliant organizer and a worthy role model. To develop students' leadership skills, it is necessary to clarify the essence of the concept, systematize theoretical and practical approaches to the problem of leadership, actualize the leadership potential of a psychologist, identify the development level of leadership qualities and skills, develop and test a training program of psychological support, and create appropriate conditions (Petrovsky, 1982).

The need for optimization, modernization, and approbation of new highly effective, active, and interactive teaching methods is associated with the use of the training course method. The use of applied aspects in the training of practical psychologists with the training course method contributes to the leadership skills development of students of psychological and pedagogical direction (Chen, 2019). Training courses reveal participants' skills in communication, feedback, self-introduction, self-presentation, negotiation, and conflict management. With experience, students become more confident in themselves, in their skills, they acquire the motivation to activity, seeing the practical success of leadership competence (Skalicky et al., 2020). A person develops in society, society is a group of people, and there is a group of participants at a training course (McKim et al., 2017). Thus, a training course is a final rehearsal of specific professional or everyday situations that require students of psychological and pedagogical direction to demonstrate leadership skills.

2. Problem Statement

One of the institutional managerial capabilities of the Youth Workshop of Psychological Counselling (YWPC), which makes it possible to increase unit competitiveness, is the development of its participants' leadership skills. Training activity involves the emergence of certain psychological challenges facing YWPC participants. These challenges relate to the insufficient level of leadership development among students of psychological and pedagogical direction, as well as to the level of their psychological readiness to manage groups (Umansky, 2001). In the context of leadership topic development, it is relevant to study the content of subject-pattern, motivational-volitional, and operational-mental components of psychological readiness to act as a leader and flexibly adapt to changing conditions. Many students are not able to demonstrate social activity, take responsibility and initiative, conduct psychological training courses, that is, they do not show leadership skills. The question that arises is what are the psychological conditions that ensure the effective development of leadership skills of students of psychological and pedagogical direction. Thus, the development of leadership skills of students of psychological and pedagogical direction, key participants in the YWPC is relevant, since it is this direction that is a priority. The development of leadership skills will contribute to the psychological readiness of YWPC participants for training activities and will provide dynamism, flexibility, and commitment to the management concept.

3. Research Questions

- Why are leadership skills professionally significant and why do they contribute to the effective implementation of the professional activity of a psychologist, what are the advantages of timely psychodiagnostics?
- The use of what active psychological and pedagogical methods and technologies in psychological training is adequate to the development of leadership qualities?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the possibilities of the YWPC in the development of leadership skills of students of psychological and pedagogical direction, to substantiate psychological conditions for the development of leadership skills of students of psychological and pedagogical direction in the process of participation in the training activities of the YWPC.

5. Research Methods

In order to accomplish the set tasks, the following methods were used: review analysis method, including theoretical analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature on the topic under study; psychodiagnostic method (testing, survey); summative and formative assessment; mathematical statistics methods.

Specific methodologies:

- Methodology of “Diagnostics of leadership abilities” by E. Zharikov, E. Krushelnitsky (as cited in Fetiskin et al., 2002);
- “Assessment of communicative and organizational inclinations in the process of initial professional consultation” by V. V. Sinyavsky and B. A. Fedorishin (as cited in Raigorodsky, 2007);
- Test for the “Assessment of self-control in communication” by Marion Snyder (as cited in Ilyin, 2015).

6. Findings

The scientific novelty of the study is as follows:

- the importance and necessity of leadership skills for students of psychological and pedagogical direction, as well as the advantages of timely psychodiagnostics, were substantiated;
- the training program for the development of leadership skills of students of psychological and pedagogical direction, aimed at mainstreaming leadership potential of YWPC participants in psychological activity, was proposed and tested, psychological conditions for effective leadership development of students of psychological and pedagogical direction in the process of training activities of the YWPC were determined.

The research was carried out on the basis of the Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education “Adyghe State University”, the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology. The study involved 33 students participating in the Youth Workshop of Psychological Counselling.

The study consisted of three stages:

Stage 1 – a summative assessment. Diagnostics of leadership skills development level among the students, YWPC participants;

Stage 2 – a formative experiment. Implementation of the designed program of psychological training courses, discussions, and workshops for the development of leadership skills of the students, YWPC participants;

Stage 3 – a control experiment. Re-diagnostics of students' leadership skills development level.

The first stage of the experimental study was a summative assessment which provided a full picture of the level of leadership, communication, organization abilities, as well as the level of self-control in communication among students of psychological and pedagogical direction. The results of the study conducted with the use of the “Diagnostics of leadership abilities” designed by E. Zharikov, E. Krushelnitsky indicate that 45.5% of research YWPC participants demonstrated a poorly expressed level of leadership skills. This indicates that such subjects rarely take the initiative and responsibility for their own activities and the activities of other people, participate in the organization and conduct of social events, due to which we can conclude that these students need psychological influence with the help of a leadership development program. 54.5% of the students of psychological and pedagogical direction have a medium expressed leadership skills level. Such subjects are ready to take responsibility, they are reliable, and are sufficiently self-critical. However, the level of their volitional self-regulation is not sufficient to be adequately resistant to stress and adaptive to new changing situations that are often encountered in the training group. A strongly expressed level of leadership skills of YWPC students was not revealed.

Further, we investigated the level of communicative and organizational skills of students of psychological and pedagogical direction using “Assessment of communicative and organizational inclinations in the process of initial professional consultation” by V. V. Sinyavsky and B. A. Fedorishin. 21.2% of YWPC participants were diagnosed with a low level of communication skills. They do not often take the initiative in communication and an interest in social life, they feel constrained in a new company, prefer to spend time alone, limit their communication to a narrow circle of acquaintances, have difficulties in establishing new social connections and speaking in public in the training group. 24.2% of the subjects were found to have a level below the average, indicating that the subjects are not sufficiently proactive in communication, do not seek to make new acquaintances, in conflict situations, they show softness, uncertainty, and may back away from their goals. 33.3% of the students of psychological and pedagogical direction have an average level of communicative inclinations. They strive to build constructive relationships with people, do not limit their circle of acquaintances to their immediate circle, but they tend to avoid conflict situations, and are not sufficiently prepared to maintain stability in communication. 15.1% of the subjects were found to have an above the average level of communicative inclinations. They feel confident in a new environment, quickly find new friends, tend to expand their circle of acquaintances, if necessary, engage in social activities, are ready to help others, but without showing initiative. A high communication skills level was demonstrated by 6.2% of the students. They have extraversion personality traits, high potential to build constructive, proper, and reliable relationships. They feel the need for collective activity and are excellent at joining a new group, working together, strategically building relationships, and solving social problems. Such students easily revive group communication, like to organize interactive games, events, and show purposefulness in activities. Often, at an unconscious level, the subjects themselves look for ways to meet their communication needs.

24.2% of YWPC participants demonstrated a low level of organizational skills. Such students irrationally allocate their time and priorities, can hardly plan their activities, do not have enough skills in organizing other people's activities, and have low frustration tolerance and stress resistance. 27.3% of the subjects were found to have a level below the average. These students know their responsibilities, but do not always perform them properly. They also have problems with the selection and keeping regular hours corresponding not only to their needs but also to social requirements. 36.4% of the students of psychological and pedagogical direction have an average organizational inclinations level. They are diligent in the performance of their duties, their time management skills are at the middle level, if necessary, such students can take responsibility for organizing group activities and social events, but not often take the initiative to do so. 12.1% of YWPC participants have an above the average level of organizational inclinations. They make their own decisions without difficulty and know how to be responsible for the consequences of their actions. In tense and conflict situations, they know how to be flexible and figure out ways to solve them. Being in a team, such students are active in organizing events, creating and conducting training courses, non-standard tasks. However, to increase the level of organizational skills, a systematic psychological influence is needed. A high level of organizational skills was not found.

To diagnose the self-control level of the students of psychological and pedagogical direction, we applied the methodology "Assessment of self-control in communication" by Marion Snyder. 60.6% of the students showed a poorly expressed level of self-control in communication. Most often, they use habitual patterns of behaviour, which indicates the presence of rigidity; it is difficult for them to adapt to situations and people, as well as to find new, more rational ways of behaving. Most often, such students are overly straightforward. A medium expressed level of self-control is demonstrated by 39.4% of YWPC participants. They tend to defer the opinions and feelings of the people around them, they are quite sincere, but it is difficult for them to control their emotional impulses. A strongly expressed level of self-control in communication was not revealed.

According to the monitoring results, it can be noted that the students of psychological and pedagogical direction have insufficiently developed leadership skills, which is reflected in communicative and organizational difficulties, as well as in a low level of self-control in communication. Based on the results of the diagnostics, it can be argued that YWPC participants need systematic psychological work.

To identify the manifestation features of students' leadership skills, after passing our leadership skills development program for students of psychological and pedagogical direction, we reapplied the methodology of "Diagnostics of leadership abilities" provided by E. Zharikov, E. Krushelnitsky. The results are shown in Figure 01.

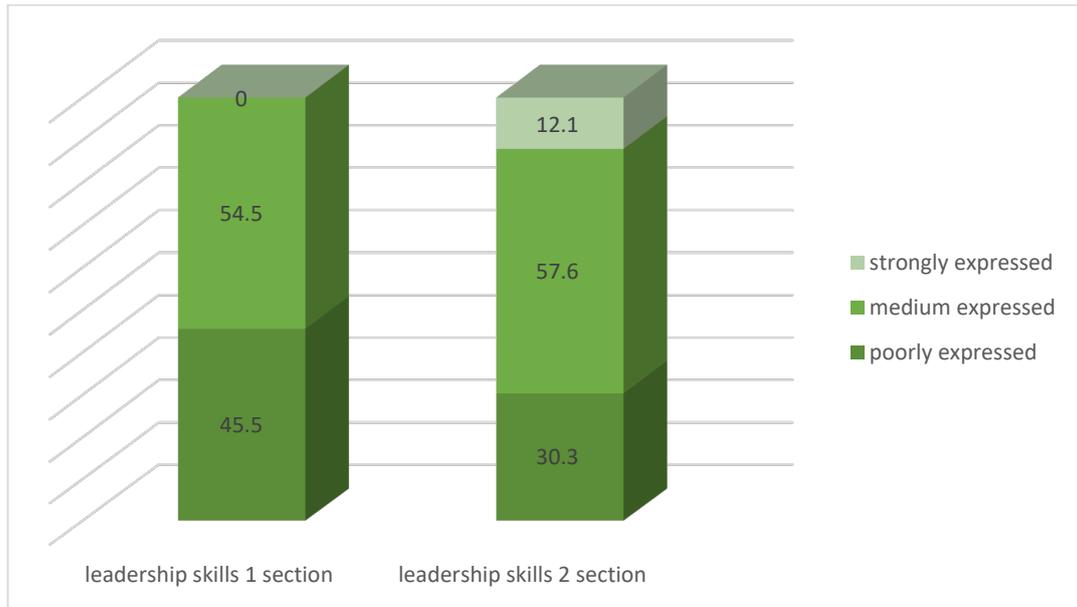


Figure 1. Results of leadership abilities diagnostics of students of psychological and pedagogical direction at the control stage of the experiment

Following the development program, YWPC participants showed the results of leadership abilities significantly higher than those before the program. Among the students, the participants demonstrating a high level of leadership abilities appeared, which confirms the effectiveness of the leadership development program we have designed.

Then, with the group of subjects, the methodology “Assessment of communicative and organizational inclinations in the process of initial professional consultation” by V. V. Sinyavsky and B. A. Fedorishin was repeated to monitor the results of the program. The results are shown in Figure 02.

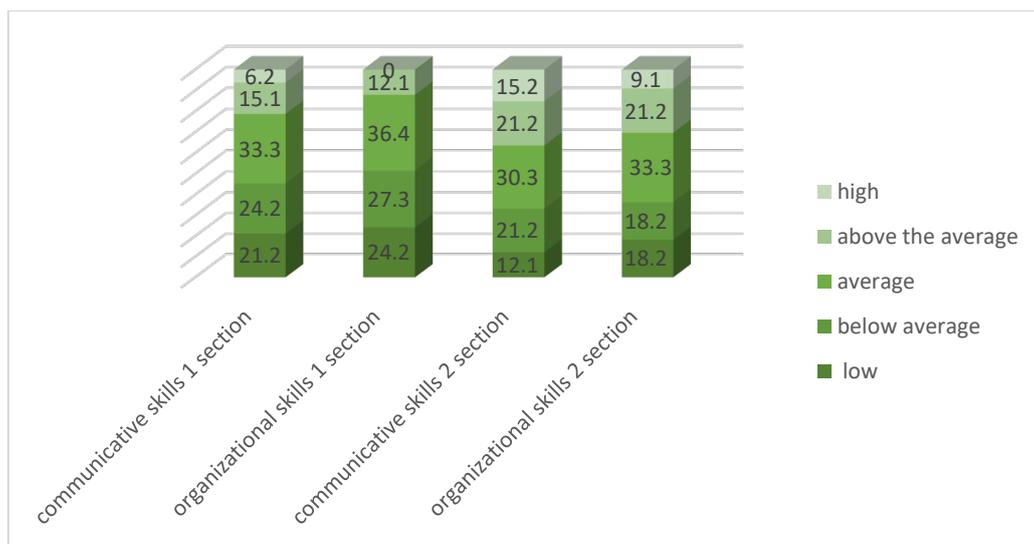


Figure 2. Comparative results of the diagnostics of communicative and organizational inclinations of students of psychological and pedagogical direction

After completing all stages of the development program, YWPC participants have managed to achieve success in increasing their communication skills. This is reflected in the positive dynamics of changes.

Communication skills of students of psychological and pedagogical direction are critical and very important aspects of leadership in the spectrum of the teaching profession. Communication is the main tool in the training activities of YWPC participants. In order to establish close connection with the group, correctly present themselves as a leader of the training circle, maintain effective feedback, and carry out other tasks performed simultaneously with educational tasks during the training course, leaders need to have high communication skills levels.

The restudy results showed positive changes in the organizational skills of YWPC participants. The level of organizational skills of 5% of the participants has risen to high values, which was not observed in the group of participants in the primary study.

We re-tested the participants' level of self-control in communication in order to identify changes in the results of the group of participants. The results of the test for the “Assessment of self-control in communication”, designed by Marion Snyder, are presented in Figure 03.

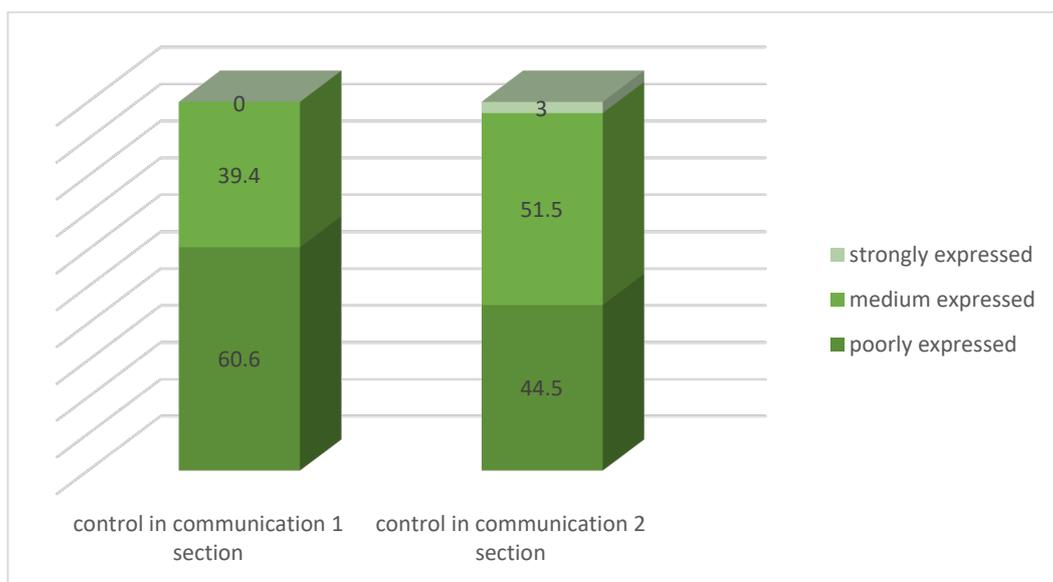


Figure 3. Comparative results of self-control level diagnostics of students of psychological and pedagogical direction according to the methodology for the “Assessment of self-control in communication”, designed by M. Snyder, at the control stage of the experiment

For a leader, the ability to be flexible in communication and to take into account the opinions of surrounding people is important, but at the same time, it is necessary for a leader to adhere to their own point of view and defend both their own interests and the interests of the group. The optimal level of self-control in communication for leaders is a medium expressed one. Leaders with a medium level of control in communication combine flexibility and sincerity, which favorably affects communication within the group and the building of the group's relationship with the external environment.

7. Conclusion

The practical significance of this study lies in the psychodiagnostics of various aspects of leadership, in the designing of specialized training courses for leadership skills development of students of psychological and pedagogical direction, as well as in the development of recommendations for the selection and training of leaders.

We carried out the experimental study aimed at exploring the leadership skills development degree which a modern specialist in psychological and pedagogical direction should have. According to the results of the ascertaining stage of the study, it was revealed that many students have an insufficient level of the development and manifestation of leadership abilities. There is a low level of communication and organizational skills, creative activity, there is no necessary level of self-confidence to overcome difficult situations.

According to the results of the approbation of the program aimed at mainstreaming the leadership potential in psychological and pedagogical activity, at the control stage of the experiment, positive changes occurred for all indicators characterizing the leadership potential. Thus, the program we have designed and tested is effective in developing leadership skills of students of psychological and pedagogical direction, the YWPC of the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology of ASU helps to expand the opportunities for training qualified personnel with leadership skills.

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