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**Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future**

**PROFESSIONAL SELF-CONCEPT OF STUDENTS – FUTURE  
PSYCHOLOGISTS**

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***Abstract***

The article deals with the problem of studying the professional self-concept of students majoring in psychology. The results of an experimental study of the professional self - concept content and structure are presented. Disclosed submission of future psychologists about himself, about his career and personality traits that are important to the profession. In connection with the country is transition to a digital economy, the tasks of searching for a new approach to the system of occupational self-determination, training, retraining, and social adaptation of young people in the labor market arise. Modern trends in the society are intellectualization of mass professions, digitalization of information bases and systems, customization of educational products, introduction of game technologies (gamification) as a tool of professional tests, as well as commercialization of professions. The survey and projective methods of psychological testing are applied. The factor structure of the organization of professional Self-concept of future psychologists is revealed. Prospects of researches are defined.

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**Keywords:** Student, self-concept, professional self-concept, self-image, motivation, empathy.



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Today, specialists in the field of psychology are involved in a wide range of socially important tasks including nation's mental health maintenance. Even in the near future, the need for professional psychologists will increase due to the growing psychological resonance on some extreme, highly uncertain socio-cultural and informational processes (Betz & Schifano, 2000). Having unique methodical means and professional skills, the psychologist is capable to immerse greatly into the person's inner world. In order to avoid involuntary mental trauma requires high professionalism (Kasyanik, Gulk, Olennikova, Zakharov & Kruglikov, 2017).
- 1.2. Professional formation of psychologists begins within the period of training in academic institution, which provides not only the professional basis, but also the basis for spiritual and personal development of specialists (Alexankov, Trostinskaya, & Pokrovskaya, 2018). Professional self-concept of psychology students is formed relating to the scientific-theoretical and practical knowledge of the psychological nature of man and society; as the integration product of scientific and common schemes of the psychological reality interpretation (Spihunova, Rabosh, Soldatov, & Deniskov, 2017). Its content is determined by the future specialists accepting the primarily humanistic values, which are self-worth awareness of the human personality, its uniqueness and individuality; recognition of the multifaceted personality development; conscious and emotional acceptance of the chosen profession, bringing the highest satisfaction and being the meaning of life; understanding of the creative nature of professional activity, requiring a lot of a neuro-mental input, a constant self-improvement; a mastering the professional and ethical culture, limiting the boundaries of the private space invasion; the ability to empathize (Almazova, Beliaeva, & Kamshilova, 2018)

## 2. Problem Statement

Professional activity of the psychologist makes high demands on the personality of the specialist. Personal portrait of the professional psychologist is multidimensional and includes emotional, intellectual, moral, regulatory features (Chernyavskaya, 2017). In one of the studies, a list of 18 traits is presented, they are: decency (honesty, truthfulness), foresight, discernment (an ability to foresee a future result of their work, the economic, social and psychological consequences of our decisions), enterprising (an ability for independent, active actions, and a manifestation of resourcefulness, practicality, ingenuity), reliability ("practicing what you preach", commitment to fulfill the promises made), the analytic mind (an ability to analyze the facts, phenomena, to identify the key idea), intuition (an ability to make the right decision with a lack of necessary information, or time for its understanding), humanness (sensitivity, care for people, respect for their opinions, their merits), originality (a desire to seek some new, original solutions), consistency, balance (an ability to control their feelings and behavior), communicability (an ability to have ways with people, making them trust you), self-criticism (an ability to evaluate their achievements objectively, to comprehend their actions critically), rationalism (an ability to think sensibly and logically, make deliberate decisions), tolerance for the views of others (an ability to understand other people's views, respect their tastes, habits, an ability to forgive others' mistakes and misconceptions), a

wide outlook, empathy (an ability to experience what others experience and feel), passion for work (keen interest in the professional activities), an ability to understand others (an ability to listen, understand the situation, understand and accept the arguments of another person), modesty (the ability to keep silent about their merits and achievements, an ability to be down-o-Earth, without any arrogance) (Razinkina et al., 2018). Despite the vastness of the list above, it certainly does not cover all the personal features that ensure the effectiveness of professional activities. Moreover, it should be taken into account that the requirements for the person may vary depending on the type of activity of the psychologist: psychodiagnostics, counseling, psychocorrection, professional orientation, etc. (Zakharova & Krasnoschokov, 2016).

### **3. Research Questions**

Considering the importance of professional training of psychologists, a study of the professional self-concept features has been conducted among the psychology students from the different higher educational institutions of St. Petersburg. The study involved 70 students aged 18 - 22, including 20 men and 50 women enrolled in different courses.

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

To study the problem of studying the professional self-concept of students majoring in psychology.

### **5. Research Methods**

In our study, the professional self-concept of students was considered from the perspective of the professional self-image, dominant career orientations, the structure of self-attitude and personality traits by means of traditional psycho-diagnostic specially developed methods. The procedures of content analysis, variation statistics, correlation and factor analysis were also used to process the empirical material.

### **6. Findings**

Even at an initial stage of the professional insight, training at the academic institution – young people have a fairly wide range of ideas about their future profession. However, their ideas are superficial and formal, saturated with social clichés that have developed around the specialty of the psychologist. Personal motives for choosing the profession of a psychologist vary hugely. Students named 15 motives, among which the most common is a knowledge of human psychology – 34.4% and the humanistic motive of providing psychological assistance to others, both adults and children, and children with special needs which is noted by about 30% of the study participants. The importance of other motives is significantly lower. Thus, 16.4% of students noted a self-help, an ability to understand themselves, gaining self-confidence. Only 8.2% of students indicated love for people. However, at the stage of learning the

profession, some students are clearly still in doubt about their career choice since the motive for choosing a profession was often the motive for solving their own problems, prestige and material values.

In the group of students, professional self-image is represented by a variety of characteristics that reflect the identification of professional skills and roles, personal qualities and a focus on self-realization. Although it is represented by fewer features than the self-image of a person, it reflects the identification with the most significant professional qualities. In the structure of the “universal” self, the dominant position is occupied by ideas of such social roles, as "daughter/son", "girl", "future wife/ future mother". These roles are important for 37.0% of the study participants.

The content of the professional self-image reflects the incompleteness of its formation. Only for 17.9% of students regard empathy as a fundamental feature of the psychologist personality and the structure of professional self-image. They identify themselves with kindness, care, responsiveness, good attitude to people, attention during the session and a sense of compassion. Self-identification with their professional roles, a focus on self-actualization and self-realization occur step by step, by the moment of university graduation. Professional self-image includes such roles of psychologist as "consultant", "researcher", "psychodiagnostician", "counselor", "educator", which was observed in 16.9% of students. Expectations from the profession and opportunities for self-realization are also implied in the content of the professional self-image: "possible PhD of Psychology", "strive for self-improvement", "(I) welcome professional development". Among the participants of our study there were 13.5% of such students.

The formation of a professional self-concept is based on those personal traits and professional qualities that are recognized as the “ideal” psychologist activities. Students name a large list of such features, which largely coincides with traditional ideas about the psychologist personality. Thus, as the most frequent ideal features students picked goodwill (13.5% of the study participants), a professional skill of attentive listening (12.2%), empathy as a manifestation of compassion (8.5%). A wide range of personal traits and a large individual frequency spread of their occurrence among the students reflect the beginning of the of professional identity formation, the lack of professional experience for this self-identification.

The low importance of empathy for students, which contradicts the typical idea of a psychologist, led us to an experimental search for the causes of this fact. For this purpose, a specially developed projective technique "Determination of the ability to compassion" was used, which simulates different situations of traumatization (Tabolina & Gulk, 2018). As an incentive material the images of the child with a wounded finger, the child in a wheelchair, the chick fallen out of a nest and the broken tree were offered (Kruglikov & Olennikova, 2015). The students, future psychologists, remained calm, while watching the condition of a sick child in a wheelchair, although they attributed him the experience of sadness (Zabrodin, Leonov, Melentieva, & Perepechenova, 2013). A child with a cut finger caused surprise or fright in them, while the child himself, from their point of view, experiences suffering. This discrepancy between the person's own and the others' experiences suggests a lack of empathy (Olennikova, Kasyanik, Gulk., Zakharov & Kruglikov, 2018). Its development requires the experience of real interaction with various categories of people and experience of self-reflection. It is possible that the inability to empathize has determined the low importance of empathy as an ideal professional feature,

although at an unconscious level they are able to accept the compassion of a person in a critical situation (Rubtsov et al., 2007).

Empathy is a professionally important feature for representatives of the psychological community, because psychologists are initially focused on understanding the other person, on feeling their experiences, on feeling their inner world (Baranova, Gulk, Tabolina, & Zakharov, 2018). Disciplines included in the educational program of future psychologists are aimed at a better understanding of people in need, of assistance that specialists in this area will be provided. These disciplines provide the highest possible, within the educational process, informing of students about the features of the proper interaction with people (Bakayev, Vasilyeva, Kalmykova, & Razinkina, 2018).

The current socio-cultural situation has largely changed the meaning of higher education, in particular in the psychological area. There is a growing tendency of turning higher education into one of the bases for the career growth. In this regard, it is reasonable to consider the structure of career orientations of students. Career orientations of the psychology students seemed to reflect the greatest importance of service, i.e. working with people, helping them. The group average reaches  $8,0 \pm 2,72$  points. They associate their career advancement primarily with high moral ideals: "to make the world a better place", "to help other people", "to achieve harmony between people", etc. At the same extent, the stability of the place of work, which provides the need for security, predictability of the surrounding reality and professional activity are important for further promotion ( $8,0 \pm 2,45$  points). In the process of building of their careers, students take into account the possibility of integrating their lifestyles. Due to the choice of the profession of a psychologist students hope to find a balance between the family life and self – development ( $7,52 \pm 1,89$  points). For them, inner freedom, independence from organizational rules, regulations of the organization are important in building a career ( $7,0 \pm 2,21$  points).

It's also noteworthy that at the initial stage of professionalization the value of professional competence is expressed moderately –  $5,68 \pm 1,76$  points, which is mainly due to the intellectual, emotional and communicative difficulties of training during this period, a sense of helplessness in the development of definitions and the lack of practical training. Orientation to professional competence is being formed by the end of university education.

In the hierarchy of career orientations, a low position is occupied by the stability of the place of residence –  $5,0 \pm 2,36$  points. Students rarely associate a career development with a certain place of residence, with the region of residence and work. This trend is more evident when the students set the goal of having their own family, a home.

The career orientations identified by the questionnaire reflect their importance at the current moment of the study, however the change is possible in the distant future. Students were asked to draw "My career 5 years after graduation". It is important that 55.9% of students included themselves in the image of the future career of a psychologist. Among the participants of the study, 43.3% of students, whilst creating an image of a future career, depicted the activities of a psychologist associated with interaction with different people. At the same time, 12.3% of students studying psychology unconsciously exclude themselves from the sphere of professional activity of a psychologist, and 8.0% illustrate themselves not only in the sphere of psychology but also pedagogy, business, banking.

The structure of personality of future psychologists is formed mainly by the qualities typical of this profession. A generalized personal portrait of the future psychologists is the following: future psychologists are different with the ways of communicating with people, an ability to establish contacts with a large audience. They're friendly, condescending. They are characterized by independence of judgment, autonomy, focusing on their own opinion in the process of decision-making. They believe that both parties are guilty when conflicts occur, criticism addressed to them can cause irritation. The psychologists differ by a number of cognitive properties: an ability to generalize and analyze the phenomena of the surrounding reality, to establish logical connections and patterns between events. The imagination and reverie are greatly developed; the desire for experiments, ignoring the fear of making a mistake and openness for new ideas are well-expressed.

The emotional sphere is represented by emotional sensitivity and moderate frustration: obstacles on the way to achieving the goal don't lead to any noticeable discomfort, but to overcome them time and strength are necessary. In the usual environment, they keep calm, self-confident, able to protect emotionally their Self. They are prone to be optimistic, believe in luck and in a favorable outcome. When a complex, extraordinary situation occurs, there is a feeling of anxiety and disturbing. Strong-willed control is developed moderately (Kruglikov & Olennikova, 2015).

A factorization of the correlation matrix allowed us to identify five factors describing the structure of the professional Self-concept of psychology students. The first factor is "reduction of a social responsibility". It is presented by indicators of career orientation – integration of lifestyles, as well as the sense of duty, suspicion and discipline indicators. The second factor is "student's personal stress". The factor is saturated with indicators of self-confidence, emotional sensitivity, dreaminess, anxiety. The third factor is "an intense search for the meaning of the profession." This factor is represented by indicators of an orientation to management, service and entrepreneurship as different types of the career orientation, frustration and reflected self-attitude. The fourth factor is "a fear of personal change." The factor is represented by indicators of sociability, dreaminess, self-worth, self-attachment.

The fifth factor is "an unprofessional orientation". The factor includes only one indicator – the importance of the stability of the place of residence as a career orientation.

## **7. Conclusion**

7.1 Professional self-concept of the psychology students is a complex personal education that integrates the idea of a person as a professional, a career orientation, priority professional motives, self-attitude. At the stage of early professionalization – education academic institutions– the structure of the professional self-concept is described by five factors that reflect the reduction of a social responsibility, student's personal stress, an intense search for the meaning of the profession, a fear of personal change and possible non-professional orientation.

7.2 The duration of studying course at the university has a significant impact on the formation of professional consciousness. By the end of the training identification with professional roles, with the content of professional activity of the psychologist increases, orientation to value of the identity and self-acceptance extends, as well as the value of the socially approved self.

7.3 The structure of the personality of psychology students at the early stages of professionalization is represented by the features necessary for professional activity.

Summing up the study, we should note the need to expand the understanding of the professional self-concept of psychologists. The comparison between professional self-concept of the beginner-psychologists and psychologists with great of experience, specialists from different areas of professional activity, in particular, psychodiagnosticians and consultants is still relevant.

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