11th ICEEPSY 2020
The International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology

SEMANTIC AND COGNITIVE CONTENT OF THE "WORK" CONCEPT: CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

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Abstract

The study was granted by the Russian Science Foundation (project No 18-18-00386), the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences and supported by RSF grant (project No 18-18-00386), Institute of Psychology RAS. The main goal of the research was to study the semantic and cognitive content of the "work" concept and to determine its differential, classificational and categoric-cognitive signs through the content analysis. The research methodology was based on the content analysis and statistics. 2,497 persons (average age - 27 years old) participated in the empiric study. The signs/indices (537 in total) occurrence frequency (total frequency of occurrence is 24,446) analysis allowed characterizing the cognitive content of the "work" concept. The study of such signs/indices manifestation peculiarities as stability/instability, distinct manifestation and intensity conditioned system-based representation of the concept signs. Statistical review of the research results helped to determine signs being nonuniformly distributed; this distribution is characterized by kurtosis and skewness because of positive modality predominance. The "work" concept signs extremum values (occurrence frequency from 107.00 to 1351.00) express fullness, intensity and stability of these signs manifestation. A group of average positive and negative "work" concept indices includes characteristics proving young people's positive thinking of working activity from the point of view of self-identity, self-definition conation, working load peculiarities, labour management conditions and process. Negative signs mean low labour safety and protection, heavy workload and low salary level. The content analysis results offer the challenge of further "work" concept cognitive content studying and can also be bases for its components and structural correlations defining.

Keywords: Work, labour, concept "work", semantic and cognitive content, content analysis.

1. Introduction

Nowadays representatives of modern generation are mostly focused on professional and labour activity. Young people are increasingly interested in improving labour, social and economic conditions of their activity. The value of social activity (volunteering in all its aspects) and the importance of labour activity are growing nowadays.

There is a large number of researches aimed at studying work, social and professional activities and their correlations with various spheres of human life (Abul'khanova, 2007; Abdullaeva, 2018; Bessonova, 2018; Bodrov, 2007; Dodd et al., 2019; Hajek & König, 2019; Klimov, 1998; Leitão et al., 2019; Oboznov & Bessonova, 2018; Schieman & Glavin 2011; Saltzstein et al., 2001; Shin et al., 2019; Tolochek, 2015, 2018; Zhou et al., 2019). At the same time, it should be noted that the notion uniting all these constructs is the "work" concept, which is sufficiently studied and developed primarily in such sciences as Philology, Philosophy and Culture studies, but is insufficiently represented in Psychological researches (Kalachinskaya, 2015).

Most of researchers note that "work" is manifested in behavior, social and economic statuses and level of culture; it is a main condition of successful personal realization in all spheres of life, andmost significantly in labour activity. On the other hand, the "work" concept in the modern sense is still underexplored: increasing requirements for the level of individual being included in labour activity change personal perceptions of this concept content (Lokotilov, 2015; Volkova & Ten, 2017).

New living conditions introduce new norms, values, meanings, principles, factors into labour activity; this fact leads to its characteristics and descriptors being poorly structured. The study of the "work" concept will allow finding out how modern young people understand it, which substance give to it; which related constructs and what spheres of life are connected with the concept use manifestation.

2. Problem Statement

Modern researchers note that the "work" concept is well-developed in the majority of cultures, widely used in all language spheres and has different modality (Lisenko, 2018). According to a number of linguistic studies (Khafizova, 2011; Tarbeeva, 2018) an interesting regularity is revealed: different cultures identify "work" in identical concepts. For example, work is perceived as:

- rough (physically demanding) labour (conformable to work of slaves and animals), strenuous and time-consuming;
- a way to earn money making it possible to survive;
- value from the point of view of fostering skills in fulfilling difficult tasks.

Theoretical analysis of the concept showed that its semantic content can be different. First of all, "work" is understood as a financially or non-financially rewarded human activity that aims to create certain benefits. Secondly, this type of activity is conscious, focused and involves some efforts to achieve positive results (Prusova & Boronova, 2008). This article reviews a wide range of "activities" as "work" (from domestic chores to studying at school or university). Thirdly, work is also studied as a person's type and place of work, in case of following certain range of instructions and fulfilling certain range of tasks. Fourthly, there is a point of view that "work" means the whole period of human being awake (i.e. even

providing for human's everyday needs is also considered as "work"). Fifthly, "work" acts as a factor defining person's financial well-being as well as one's mental health, self-respect and being satisfied with own lifeand life conditions (Schultz & Schultz, 2003). At the same time it allows a person to express individuality, gives an opportunity to master new skills and to gain knowledge; "work" acts as a source of a positive (and negative) social experience and allows satisfying personal need of being included into a peculiar social group (Schultz & Schultz, 2003). Finally, work is expressed in various modalities: from positive (that brings joy, material and spiritual satisfaction and well-being) to extremely negative (can be tiresome, monotonous, physically and psychologically dangerous, i.e. stressful, worrying and unsatisfying, etc.).

It is important to note that the "work" concept can be studied from the point of view of its psychological significance (along with its semantic content). In this context, there are good reasons to talk about working efficiency and to study it at physiological, psycho-physiological, mental and social levels (as "activity" is studied) (Volochkov, 2010). This multidimensional approach is explained by multilateralism, multi-level system and complexity of "working efficiency" notion. Relying upon the Abul'khanova's (2007) research, working efficiency can be defined as a human's way of organizing and regulating one's vital activity through integration of personal needs, abilities and attitude to life, taking into account the requirements specified by society and circumstances. That is why working efficiency includes both initiative (based on needs, aspiration and personal relations) and responsibility (which determines personal vital necessity considering).

Separate specific criteria of the "work"concept were identified (in reliance on the activity criteria developed by Abul'khanova):

• Ease - difficulty;

• Success - failure;

• Satisfaction - dissatisfaction.

Taking these criteria into account, we may speak about individual variety of labour types which reflects efficiency and results of personal labour activity. I.e, it is also important to define the main types and functions of work and labour. "Work" can be generally subdivided into mental and physical types; but some researchers use more detailed classification and point out creative, high-profile, technical types, etc. (Bodrov, 2007; Klimov, 1998). Functions of "work" with regard to labour activity are usually subdivided into material (as maintenance of life), productive (as an opportunity to actualize and express oneself), socializing (as gaining social experience and expanding social contacts), social and economic (as an impact on and the use of natural resources for the benefit of society); socially enriching (as an opportunity for professional and personal growth); socially controlling (as a system of labour relations based on control and discipline); socially structuring (as a functional and role responsibilities and positions distribution) and social status (as a reflection of importance, prestige value and complexity of work) (Bodrov, 2007; Tolochek, 2018).

Theoretical review of the "work" concept shows that this construct was studied and defined variously, widely and taking into account lots of different aspects. The "work" concept is one of the main and most important construct in a sphere of concepts of any society, macro- and microgroup as well as of each individual. In this regard, the major research question is as follows: "How do modern young people under-

stand "work" and what semantic and cognitive structure does this concept have?" It should be also emphasized that the concept itself (which is studied as a close expression of the word/notion meaning for particular person) determines the specificity of this study. Tarbeeva (2018) makes a point that "each person perceives and understands the message contained in particular concept in own way being unable to capture all meanings of it owing to the person's level and features of education, occupation, living environment and personal experience" (p. 145). In other words, the concept reflects peculiar overlap of a dictionary meaning of a word with a particular person or social group's experience (Borensztajn et al., 2014; Nazarova & Pesina, 2016; Wolter, 2018). That is why the "work" concept can reflect modern young people's "labour activity" current perception; the level of their being involved into and being ready to perform this activity (Erdin & Bickhard, 2018).

Thus, the study is aimed at determining differential, classificational and categoric cognitive characteristics of the "work" concept basing on content analysis data. We suggested that the process of the empirical results content analysis can result in defining general tendencies in respondents' "work" concept semantic and cognitive content understanding as well as in finding out new trends in the "work" concept cognitive content. The main research problems are as follows:

- "work" concept cognitive content empiric study based on content analysis;
- quantitative data processing by using different ways of statistical data analysis (frequency of analysis categories and correlation indices, etc., occurrence and their distribution);
- received data content processing: defining current problems connected with work and labour activity; identifying "co-occurrence" coefficients of the content analysis categories.

3. Research Questions

The question arises: what are the notions of modern youth about the work.

4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the research was to study the semantic and cognitive composition of the concept Work and determine its differential, classification and categorical cognitive features through content analysis.

5. Research Methods

We used both linguistic and statistical approaches in the study. Design included directed associative experiment (stimulus word Work). Accordingly, the basic methods and methodology of the study were as follows: directed association experiment with the "work" as a stimulus word; "Concept cognitive content" subtest (Kholodnaya, 2019). Deductive type of quantitative and qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the results of the first step of the research. The results quantitative processing includes the use of typical methods of the statistical data analysis, i.e. frequency of analysis categories and correlation indices, etc., occurrence and their distribution (Kibal'chenko et al., 2019).

An empirical study involved 2497 people (mean age 27 years, 80% females).

6. Findings

Most of languages contain peculiar parts of speech for describing the composition, structure and functions of labour activity. If speaking about Russian language, adjectives are used here to reflect the object's properties (Kibal'chenko et al., 2019). This indicates that the "work" concept content is also characterized by adjectives reflecting its properties.

The analysis is aimed at determining the differential, classificational and categoric cognitive features of the "work" concept. Summary data on indices (features) of the "work" concept are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 01. Summarized report on empiric research results

Total quantity		Signs occurrence frequency diversity		Total	
N of indices	%	Min	Max	N (persons)	%
537	100	1	1,351	2,497	100

An array of the "work" concept features was defined in a process of young people (2,497 persons) questioning; statistic processing of this concept (descriptive characteristics) helped to identify some peculiarities (Table 2).

Table 02. "Work" concept signs frequency distribution

Characteristics of the "work" concept signs frequency distribution	Indices
Signs occurrence summary frequency	24,446
Signs occurrence average frequency	26.379
Standard deviation	122.667
Skewness	4.323 (A≥0)
Kurtosis	44.544 (E≥0)

The indices determined by questioning were divided into two groups: a group of indices with positive modality and a group of indices with negative one. Total number of indices with positive modality is 23,914 (97.78%); indices with negative modality equaled 532 (2.22%); negative significant modality rate is substantially lower (according to the Fisher angular transformation: φ^*_{emp} = 281.48; φ^*_{cr}= 2.31) and creates distribution skewness. This result confirms the importance of the "work" concept signs positive modality prevalence at p≤0.01.

Analysis of the frequently occurring signs showed that the maximum frequency values of the negative modality indices are *"hard" (660)* and *"difficult" (617);* while positive modality index "*interesting*" is characterized by 1,351.00 maximum frequency values. An index with neutral modality (*"labour")* and maximum occurrence frequency *(1040)* was also found thanks to the analysis. At the same time this index is included into a group of synonyms of the "work" concept. It is interesting to note that the occurrence frequency of the indices with positive modality predominates and the indices with negative modality are characterized by low occurrence frequency. This fact let us suppose that modern generation representatives define work and labour as positive activities. This sphere of life may even be of highest priority for young people from the point of view of self-realization in social and professional spheres, as well as from the point of view of material support and career development. If speaking about the neutral indices identified, we

should note that they mainly express the types of work (physical, mental, creative, etc.) and rather indicate the diversity of activities that are reflected in perceptions (experiences) of young people.

Table 3 demonstrates the extremum values of ten positive, neutral and negative modality indices occurrence frequency.

Table 03. Extremum values of the "work" concept indices occurrence frequency

Indices modalities		Index occurrence highest frequency	Indices semantic expression
Positive modality maximum values	1	**1,351.00**	Interesting
	2	704.00	Favourite
	3	677.00	Responsible
	4	531.00	Easy
	5	488.00	Well-payed
	6	422.00	Compulsive
Neutral modality maximum values	1	**1040.00**	Labour
	2	851.00	Payed
	3	422.00	Mental
	4	384	Physical
	5	376	Creative
Negative modality maximum values	*1*	***660.00***	*Hard*
	2	***617.00***	*Difficult*
	3	*486.00*	*Mammoth task (complicated)*
	4	*317.00*	*Miserable salary (a hand-to-mouth salary)*
	5	*252.00*	*Labour-intensive work (consuming, resources intensive)*
	6	*233*	*Monotonous*
	7	*204*	*Tiresome*
	8	*195*	*Infinite cross*
	9	*111*	*Dangerous*
	10	*107*	*Dull*

Most of the "work" concept statistically average indices are included into a group with the occurrence frequency value from 106.288 (negative modality) up to 149,046 (positive modality). The types of labour activity change thanks to the processes of society development and scientific and technology progress. The results of these processes are reflected in an individual's personal "work" notion understanding and characterizing from the point of view of one's self-actualization, willingness to self-determination, workload peculiarities, labour conditions and management. In this regard there is a need of classifying labour types, orientations, intensity, etc. We tried to classify the "work" concept indices characterized by average occurrence frequency on the bases of theoretical analysis and the results received (Table 4).

Table 04. The "work" concept indices with average occurrence frequency classification by various bases

Classified by	"Work" concept indices	Occurrence frequency	
		∑	Rank
The process and results of work	Fancy (122), quality workmanship (122), easy (122) successful (108), well-payed (116), entry-level (107), extensive (100), pleasing (90), obligatory (77), good (72), specialized (64), best (62). Dangerous (111), low-payed (74), bad (71).	1,418	1
The type of labour management	Group (59), team (70), composite (140), individual (141), self-guided (61), home (125), office (59).	655	2
The character of pressure and the level of undertaken efforts	Ambitious (109), patient (90), active (74), realistic (60). Strenuous (80), tiresome (63), resources consuming (63).	539	3
The labour management and tempo	Energetic (116), fast (124). Monotonous (97), dull (107), rote (12).	456	4
The type of activity	Cognitive (97), research (59), multifarious (93), interesting (83).	332	5
The labour (working) conditions	Night (117), morning (59), temporary (142).	318	6
The labour aim characteristics	Purposeful (78), focused (78).	156	7

Such bases as labour process and results take centre stage according to the results (Table 4). Most indices are characterized by positive modality but there are also some negative indices found in the research (e.g., low-payed, dangerous, bad., etc.). The results obtained can be easily explained if the "work" is studied as the "labour activity" and the respondents are focused on evaluative and effective indices. Most of respondents describe their labour activity basing on the level of payment, the work being high-/low-profile, attractive/unattractive.

The last (7th) rank of distribution extremes is based on "the labour aim characteristics". The indices included into this group reflect the respondents being objective concerning the given goals of work and subjective concerning the accepted ones. At the same time, the last rank position of these indices can be explained by the fact that labour is usually perceived as something regular, everyday, which does not require setting separate, special goals (the work is rather perceived as a tool to achieve any goals, but not a target itself).

The rank positions distribution by indices grouped in accordance with the type of activity, the character of pressure, labour conditions and management, may indicate certain trends in and peculiarities of the young people "work" concept understanding and defining. In particular, it can be assumed that young people are aimed for:

- group and individual activity being completely professional, successful and of high quality;
- labour activity being energetic, patient and mind-enriching;
- self-actualization and self-development in a process of working;
- their labour being well-payed.

At the same time young people worry about the following challenges of work:

- labour safety and protection;

- heavy workload;

- underpayment

The results received in the research are the indicative of young people's reflexive and impartial take of labour they perform or plan to perform.

When processing the results, we identified and separated a group of positive and negative indices that appear less frequently; these indices violate the normality of the content analysis results distribution (according to the Kolmogorova-Smirnova criterion). The kurtosis (44.544) of the "work" concept indices distribution (the lower limit of the confidence interval is 22.442 and the upper limit is 75.315) indicates that the indices distribution curve has a high and sharp vertex, i.e. values are abnormally distributed. The kurtosis appears as a result of a number of indices characterized by occurrence frequency from 1 to 4 (Table 5).

Table 05. Kurtosis indices in the "work" concept characteristics distribution

Frequency	Indices	
	Positive modality	**Negative modality**
Indices with unstable manifestation		
1	Authoritative, fault-free, combat, perceived, elevated, diplomatic, day, good, sincere, conceptual, smart, courier, low-response, cute, modern, ravishing, unchallenging, irresistible, distributed, resource, happy, oral, front, wide-ranging, nimble	Immoral, emergency, rescissory, bureaucratic, wolfish, wild, directory, doleful, unpromising, undervalued, wrong, unprofitable, lifelong, slavish, monkey job, corrupt, long, annoying, fatal, suffering
2	Altruistic, budgetary, faithful, comprehensive, volitional, magic, chosen, computational, brilliant, capable, business, cheerful, ideological, extensive, enjoying, growing, contributing, capable, impact	Pointless, mindless, consumptive, unreliable, clandestine, subordinative, primitive, erroneous, contradictory, illegal, suicidal, crap job
Indices with minimal stability		
3	Excellent, significant, exciting, session, sufficient, abroad, gained, salary, innovative, slick, any, alluring, voguish, pioneering, preventive, common, self-fulfilling, spider-work, conscious, delicate, universal, uplifting	Loss-making, stupid, low-income, unexplained, undesirable, unemployed, ambitious, painful, time-consuming, evil, negative, remedial
4	Mature, feeding, resourceful, independent, obligatory, supporting, manufacturing, early, secret, structured, careful, demanding	Odious, burdening, tedious, frigid, rotten, casual

The positive modality indices presented in Table 4 confirm the trends in young people considering "work" as being interesting, requiring conation, maintaining own authority as well as being specific, operose and wide-ranging. The negative modality indices presented in the same table expand the possible

grounds of fear and labour activity challenges: lack of motivation; signs of possible social and ethical relations dissociation, etc. The presence of such indices as "evil", "wolfish", "wild", etc. (compromising the integrity of the "work" construct and making it difficult to perceive this concept content) should also be mentioned. The presence of these indices indicates individual participants of the study being insufficiently cognitively immature, their intellectual resources being underdeveloped.

Thus, 537 indices (signs) were identified as a result of 2,497 students polling; all the indices (signs) are characterized by different occurrence frequency (total frequency is 24,446), i.e. different modality indices (signs) manifestation peculiarities. The results statistical processing showed that the indices with skewness and kurtosis are distributed irregularly (as the positive modality indices significantly prevail at $p \leq 0.01$).

The "work" concept extremum values fall in the occurrence frequency interval from 107.00 to 1351.00 reflecting the expression, intensity and stability of their manifestation.

A group of the "work" concept average positive and negative indices includes those signs that are used by young people to characterize "work" from the point of view of self-actualization, willingness to self-determination, workload peculiarities, labour conditions and management. The results of the research show positive trends in young people perceiving the labour activity (orientation towards professionalism, quality of and success in team and individual activities; activity, mental tenancy and increased influence of intelligence in labour activity; self-actualization and development in the labour process, etc.). However, persistent negative signs (such as the need of labour being protected and safe; heavy workload and insufficient salary (profitability pressure)) have also been found in the "work" cognitive content. Stability of the positive and negative indices, making up the "work" concept semantic and cognitive content, reflect the integrity of this image in the young people's mental representations as well as the young people being cognitively mature/immature, positively/negatively focused on labour.

The tendencies in young people understanding the "work" concept are confirmed by the kurtosis indices of the unstably manifested (occurrence frequency: 1-2 times) and minimally stable (occurrence frequency: 3-4 times) characteristics distribution. At the same time, the list of indices with negative modality is expanding because of the signs of possible social and ethical relations (connected with work and labour activity) dissociation presence as well as because of the mental and representation system signs being poorly-developed.

7. Conclusion

Content analysis helped to identify signs-indicators, reflecting the "work" concept cognitive content characteristics and representing a certain specific system of this concept cognitive content. The results obtained, in our opinion, open the prospects for further "work" concept cognitive content studying and can become the basis for determining its components and their structural correlations.

Acknowledgments

The author expresses gratitude to A.Yu. Kalugin, S.A. Khazova and E.I. Gorbacheva for helping in gathering the data.

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