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**TRANSFORMATIONS OF STUDENT PERSONALITIES WHILE
ADAPTING TO HARDSHIPS**

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Abstract

In humanities, more and more often we see speculations that there is an inextricable connection between a specific person and conditions of their living, adequate understanding and interpretation of human behavior and provision of social and psychological help require taking into account peculiarities of the real-life situation. Crisis phenomena are happening in any society are primarily reflected in the sphere of education. Thus, having entered the crisis period, the society starts imposing additional requirements to the content of education that fulfills social mandate for training of a special type of specialists with deep knowledge in the professional area. Discrepancy between the additional requirements to the content of education and the level of professional training of a specialist on the one hand and learning conditions of students on the other hand may create various difficult situations in the life of students. This paper considers from the positions of systemic approach the structural specifics of integral personality of students who use predominantly adaptive method for overcoming hardships of life. The author identifies and proves the influence of psychological action onto the structure of students' integral personality. The objective of the research were achieved by means of employing theoretical analysis of scholarly literature dedicated to the subject matter; by means of organizing ascertaining and educational experiments; by means of processing the experimental results with the methods of mathematical statistics.

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1. Introduction

Functioning and development of education as a significant component of the social structure is determined by economic, political and socio-cultural features of social relations. Crisis phenomena that without fail are happening in any society are primarily reflected in the sphere of education. Thus, having entered the crisis period, the society starts imposing additional requirements to the content of education that fulfills social mandate for training of a special type of specialists with deep knowledge in the professional area, capable of fast readjustment in accordance with changing life conditions, capable of easy training and retraining, establishing and sustaining social contacts, building conflictless interaction with other people.

However, in young adults having enrolled in a higher education institution, adaptation to learning may be accompanied with serious issues, because requirements to educational content and busyness of students are constantly on the rise, while the learning conditions stay the same; the issue is aggravated by shift from one form of learning to another (Soares et al., 2018; An, Dong, & Liu, 2013). Thus, the first year of studies in the higher education institution may be considered as a period of hardships that students shall constantly overcome. Definition of hardships in psychology employs a wide range of concepts: hard conditions of living, crisis events, stressful situation, etc. The common thing between the terms listed above as they are used in the Russian psychology is the concept of *hardship*.

The concept of hardship has been defined by Osukhova (2007) as a situation “where as a result of external actions or internal changes, such a personal adaptation to life takes place that results in the person's inability to fulfill their main living needs with models and methods of action (behavior) having been developed during previous periods of life” (p. 45).

In the context of university studies, we count as hardship those conditions where student-established goals do not match their abilities (Alipkhanova & Serdiukova, 2016), resulting in prerequisites for undesired changes in habitual way of life as a whole or in one of significant life spaces (Serdiukova, 2013).

In overcoming the hardships, students often employ habitual methods, at that, the harder the conditions, the wider range of actions is required of the student to overcome them.

Nartova-Bochaver (1997) highlights the importance of evaluating the situation to select a matching strategy. Ambrumova, Tikhonenko, & Kovalev (1980) believe that presence of knowledge and experience allows overcoming objectively complex situation without significant mobilization of one's resources. Interrelation between coping strategies and mechanisms of psychological defense in case of a challenging situation in young men and women has been established in studies by Borisova and Khadykina (2018). Division of coping and defensive behavior in the educational environment into hazardous and safe has been done in studies authored by Nikiforova (2016).

Shahmohammadi (2011), while analyzing gender differences in stress influence onto selection of overcoming strategy, has established that young men and women most often use religion, active overcoming, positive reinterpretation, planning and application of instrumental support, at that, some young men when meeting stressors use hardship avoidance and recuperate with comprehension of the situation or, sometimes, with alcohol and drug use. Young women more often apply stress avoidance strategy and use religion and hope for a better future to recuperate. At that, young women showed more emotional response to the hardships.

A close relation between the new spiritual consciousness and selection of overcoming strategy, primarily with the cognitive restructuring and lack of emotionally-controlled actions has been established in studies of Margitics (2009).

However, after analysis of the scholarly literature dedicated to the subject, we did not find any systemic studies on interrelation between the integral personality of students and their preferred method of overcoming hardships, which helped us in defining the topic of the current research. In this research, the author analyzes the integral personality of students basing on a theory of Merlin (1996), as a complex of individual attributes, as a large hierarchical self-regulating system that brings together the properties of nervous system, temperament, personality and meta-individuality into hierarchical levels – lower, or natural (neurodynamic, psychodynamic) and higher (personal and socio-psychological).

2. Problem Statement

While preparing to conduct this research, the author analyzed in detail the psychological literature dedicated to the topics of “person in a hardship” and “development of integral personality of students”. It resulted in revealing certain inconsistencies:

- between an increasing need in providing students with psychological assistance for overcoming hardships and insufficient level of research in this field;
- between objectively mature necessity of a systemic study of integral personality of students with different methods of overcoming hardships and prevalence of element-wise approach in studying student personality in this area;
- between a necessity to create psychological and pedagogical conditions in the educational environment of the institution of higher education that facilitate formation of confident behavior and leveling of student self-assessment as a systemic factor in transformation of integral personality on the one hand, and lack of scientifically-justified model of such development on the other side.

3. Research Questions

The subject of this research is the process of structural development of integral personality in young adults who preferably use adaptive method to overcome hardships in the context of psychological follow-up.

4. Purpose of the Study

Initiating this research, the author defined its purpose: to prove that specifically-developed program of psychological follow-up of students who preferably use adaptive method to overcome hardships is a systemic factor that determines specificity of structural changes in the integral personality of students in this category; to reveal a complex of psychological conditions capable of determining efficiency of psychological action onto the structural changes of the integral personality of students in this category.

5. Research Methods

The objective has been reached by applying theoretical analysis of scholarly literature dedicated to the issue; by organizing ascertaining and educational experiments with subsequent statistical processing of experimental data with Student t-test, discriminate function analysis, correlation analysis and factor analysis.

Methodological toolkit used was represented by a set of techniques: diagnostic questionnaire for nervous system properties developed by Strelau (1982); Temperament Structure Questionnaire (TSQ) of Rusalov (1990); diagnostic questionnaire for subjective personal control by Bazhin, Golykina, and Etkind (1984); diagnostic methods for social-psychological properties of personality in the context of conflict by K.N. Thomas as adapted by V.N. Grishina (as cited in Karelin, 2007).

6. Findings

Psychological profiles of respondents using different methods to overcome hardships show significant differences. For convenience of processing and analysis of research data, we marked the category of students who preferred adaptive method of overcoming hardships as *compromisers*, and the category of students who preferred to use transformative method as *fighters*. Statistic comparison of structures of integral personality of respondents in the *fighter* and *compromiser* categories before implementing psychological follow-up program allowed revealing 53% of reliable significant distinctions.

Discriminate function analysis revealed reliable distinctions in complex indicators of 4 levels separately and in the integral indicator of lower and higher levels, as well as in the general integral indicator of all the 4 levels.

Correlation analysis of inter-level dependencies in the structures of integral personalities of respondents in the categories of *fighters* and *compromisers* has also shown significant distinctions. The structures of personality of *fighters* were more orderly than those of the *compromiser* category.

In the *compromisers* group, a significant role in structural formation of the integral personality is played by neurodynamic and psychodynamic, i.e., natural levels, while in the *fighters* category the dominant role is played by psychodynamic, personal and social-psychological levels.

The structure of inter-level dependencies of the integral personality in the *fighters* category is more dense and ordered in comparison to that of the *compromisers* category.

Factor analysis has shown that the personality structure in the experiment participants in the category of *fighters* is more harmonious (as three complete factors have been established) than that of the respondents in the *compromisers* category (2 complete and 2 partially-complete factors have been established). As for the average saturation value of the factor weights in the personality structure, natural levels prevail in the *compromisers* category and higher levels do in the *fighters* category. Inter-factor structures in the personality structure of respondents in the *compromisers* category were represented by a small number of oblique links (4) and a large number of orthogonal links (15). In the *fighters* category, the number of oblique links was more than twice higher than that in the *compromisers* category (9), while the number of orthogonal links was less (12).

As a result of ascertaining experiment, the structure of personality of the experimental group members underwent significant transformations, while the control group showed not significant changes.

Element-wise analysis has confirmed effectiveness of the program in structural transformation of integral personality of the *compromisers* category; changes in the experimental group reached 30.4 % for some categories, while no such changes were detected in the control group.

Multidimensional factor analysis allows stating that the structure of personality of the experiment participants having received the psychological support have become more flexible and ordered, they have obtained higher adaptive potential and in their development level approaching the *fighters* category. Changes in the factor structure of the control group were insignificant.

7. Conclusion

During the conducted study, it has been proven that the structures of integral personality of respondents in the *fighters* category are systemic, organized, ordered and dense. They are characterized with a significant adaptive role of higher (personal and social-psychological) levels. The structures of personality in the *compromisers* category of students were found to be less harmonious, rigid, having a pronounced imbalance towards lower (natural) levels from the higher (social) ones.

The results obtained during the ascertaining experiment allows stating that application of a psychological follow-up program aimed at transformation of student personality was an objective determinant and systemic factor that determines features in structural changes of the integral personality in respondents who preferred using adaptive method for overcoming hardships.

The main psychological factor that determined the structural changes in the personality of students pertaining to the *compromisers* category is the specially-organized psychological follow-up that was based upon:

- complex application of conceptual provisions;
- developing a system of indicators and diagnostic tools;
- applying the methods and psychological technologies that determine transformation of worldview, convictions and attitudes of a given student;
- stimulating personal development, experience in confident behavior and leveling of self-assessment of respondents.

It has been proven that a psychological action upon transformation of integral personality of students will be rational if it is:

- capable of creating conditions for developing student's skill in optimal decision-making during hardships;
- aimed at positive goal-setting and development of a sequence of actions;
- oriented towards using the personal potential of the student, towards respect to their right to conscious choice and responsibility for a decision made.

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