

PRRAEPGDA 2020**Personal and Regulatory Resources in Achieving Educational and Professional
Goals in the Digital Age****PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AS A RESOURCE OF YOUNG
ADULT'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

In a modern dynamic environment, high demands on the personal qualities of specialists are an integral part of the process of formation and development of professionals. At the same time, maintaining psychological well-being becomes significant. The aim of our research was to study the relationship between psychological well-being and features of professional development in young adults, expressed in meaning systems that describe their activities. Respondents (N = 65) were given questionnaires to collect information about their activities, the level of work satisfaction, and the signs of negative state (burnout for medical students and stress for conscripts). The comparison of two groups of respondents allowed us to divide them by the presence or absence of negative state that indicate psychological distress. The data we obtained indicate three components of the psychological well-being: emotional acceptance of their activities; relations with the other people, and how the work is organized in terms of its process and content. Respondents belonging to different groups according to the degree of psychological well-being can be described as oriented towards the well-being of the social environment or, as "individualists", for whom the organization and content of work is more important. The prospect of using the results consists in the possibility of taking them into account in career guidance activities, as well as in predicting the success of professional self-determination of young people.

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1. Introduction

The interest of psychologists to the professional development of a person is connected, on the one hand, with the need to ensure their successful development as a specialist, reliable, effective, and stable in performance. On the other, it concerns the preservation of their physical and mental health throughout life, and the harmonious implementation of not only professional, but personal plans as well. Therefore, the search and study of psychological self-regulation mechanisms appropriate for the activities carried out in difficult conditions, is an urgent task for researchers and practitioners (Kuznetsova et al., 2018; Morosanova et al., 2020).

In the psychology of profession, there are distinguished several important stages in the development of a person as a subject of labour. They are characterized by the tasks a person needs to perform, specific motivation, the normative crises, and as a result, special mechanisms of mental regulation (Klimov et al., 2018). Passing through all these stages, underlying the subsequent ones, “normally” provides further movement towards more complicated structures of professional experience, higher professional competence, change of motivation, and increase in the functional capabilities of a person. Many researchers associate the beginning of professional development with the “option” stage or the choice of profession. This stage turns the person from an “optant” into an “adept” as he chooses an educational institution or another way of embracing the professional traditions. At this stage the first close meeting with the representatives of the chosen profession and the review of the professional choice take place (Klimov et al., 2018).

The stage of an “adept” characterized by the formation of appropriate educational motivation and gradual movement towards the “specialist model”, is traditionally described through the concept of learning activity. In this context, learning, in its nature, is the same among university students and those young people who have chosen to serve in the army at this stage of their lives. As well as admission to an educational institution, the beginning of the military service is associated with life changes and the need to adapt to the new conditions (Golovey et al., 2019; Machulskaya et al., 2015). In addition, conscription may be the first step of a military career and involves getting military occupational specialty, changing life conditions, and developing a new identity (Swain, 2016).

2. Problem Statement

This work addresses the phenomenon of psychological well-being, which is assessed with the help of the following criteria: autonomy, competence, personal growth, positive relationships with others, life goals, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 2018). In the context of professional activity these criteria make it possible to add to the phenomenology of individual professional development at each stage and to describe person’s attitude to himself as a specialist, and to his physical, organizational, and social environment (Ruth & Augustova, 2017). This task becomes especially interesting at the stage of “adept”, i. e. “a person mastering the basics of professional knowledge and skills” (Klimov et al., 2018, p. 165), acquiring a specific view of the world through the prism of the profession. The stage of “adept”, most often coinciding with taking responsibility for their first adult decisions, plays an important role in personality development (Gray et al., 2020; Knies, 2019). Thus, we believe the period of transitioning

from childhood to adulthood requires the solution of the complex task of professional self-determination, which influences people's future life and how efficient they will be. Because of the large number of alternatives and options, choosing future profession is similar to solving an equation with many unknowns (Golovey et al., 2019), aggravated by the sociotechnical changes.

3. Research Questions

A promising research course that allows us to get information about the developmental characteristics of young people at early stages of professionalization is studying the degree of their psychological well-being. It illustrates the "success" of professional self-determination, the optimal balance between external requirements and available internal resources, and therefore influences how well the current problems are solved.

Usually, at the early stages of professional self-determination, researchers pay great attention to laying the foundations and forming the professional identity of the future specialists, as the main predictor of their future professional well-being.

In this study, we propose the opposite: to start with the diagnostics of well-being and to move to the ideas people start developing about themselves and their activity.

4. Purpose of the Study

Researches adopting various approaches see psychological well-being as a certain continuum: from well-being components being fully pronounced to the experience of obvious negative states for a prolonged period of time. This makes it possible to discuss well-being through the absence of signs of distress, which results from the practically orientated approach of identification, correction, and prevention of negative conditions (e. g., chronic stress or symptoms of professional and personal deformation) at later stages of professionalization. The studies of the relationship between negative conditions and the assessment of well-being are quite widely presented in the literature (Bourne et al., 2019, Kuznetsova et al., 2018; Sommerfeldt et al., 2019).

The aim of the paper was to study how young people with different levels of psychological well-being, used as a means to assess the effectiveness of different resources at an early stage of professionalization (adept), perceive their professional activities (Klimov et al., 2018). It was suggested that psychological well-being/distress depends on professional self-determination at the stage of learning and will be reflected in the system of values used to describe the activities of young people at the early stages of professionalization.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Sample

The sample of respondents consisted of 65 young people: 47 men, 18 women (aged 18-24 y. o., $\sigma = 19.6$). Gender inequality is explained by the fact that 40 military conscripts participated in the study (40 men; average age – 19.3 ($\sigma = 1.06$); specialisation – performing garrison and guard duties). The second

part of the sample was made up of medical students (N = 25 (19 females); average age – 20, ($\sigma = 1.4$); specialisation – medical business).

5.2. Methods

Respondents were offered several techniques aimed at obtaining different information (Table 1). The total number of questionnaires was the same, but in order to distinguish between respondent with or without distress, two samples were offered different questionnaires.

Table 1. Research techniques and their purposes

Study purpose	The whole sample (N = 65)	
Getting general information about the respondents	Demographic Questionnaire and Subjective Success Scale	
	Test of life-meaning orientations (LMO-scale) (Leontiev, 2000)	
Getting information about relationships with colleagues/team members	Assessment of the socio-psychological climate (SPC) (Fetiskin et al., 2009)	
Getting information about the leading activities at this stage of life	Semantic differential (SD) “My work” (Abdullaeva, 2016)	
	Abridged version of the questionnaire “Subjectively Important Performance Characteristics: Job Diagnostic Survey” (Velichkovskaya, 2005)	
	Questionnaire for assessing components of job satisfaction (Ivanova, Rasskazova, Osin, 2012)	
Distinguishing between respondents with or without distress depending on the specifics of their activity.	Students (N = 25)	Conscripts (N = 40)
	“Professional burnout” questionnaire (adapted by Vodopyanova, 2009).	“Labor Stress Survey”, Russian version of the Job Stress Survey (JSS) (Velichkovskaya, 2005.)

Given the socioeconomic orientation of the medical profession and the possible communicative difficulties, medical students were offered a questionnaire to diagnose the burnout symptoms. Respondents with at least one of these symptoms were put into the group with distress. Conscripts are recruits under oath becoming subjects of military law and allowed to be assigned weapons and military equipment. Thus, to select respondents from this group, a questionnaire of the sources of stress and its severity was applied.

The data were processed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS 22.0 for Windows.

6. Findings

Out of the general sample (N = 65), there was distinguished a group of respondents with signs of negative conditions, i.e. conscripts with pronounced and high levels of stress according to the JSS survey (n = 16) and medical students with high results in at least one scale of the burnout questionnaire (n = 15).

The most common stress factors for the recruits (listed from the most to the least common) are the following: lack of time to satisfy personal needs and to have rest, high work responsibilities, limited opportunities for professional growth, need to perform work for the others, constant interruptions and distractions from work. The most pronounced symptom in medical students was emotional exhaustion,

indicating the lack of resources, whereas the least pronounced one was depersonalization, expressed through cynicism, unjustified cruelty, and formal attitude towards others.

Thus, there were received two groups of respondents named as “prosperous or without distress” (N = 34) and “with distress” (N = 31). Significant differences obtained by comparing averages are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Statistically significant differences in indicators between samples of respondents with and without signs of psychological distress

Scales	With distress N = 31	Without distress N = 34	Mann-Whitney test	
	Averages		Z	p
Subjective success	59.6	78.57	- 2.042	.041
General index of meaningfulness of life (LMO-scale)	102.13	115.25	- 2.994	.003
SPC	5.66	6.03	- 2.010	.044
Satisfaction with the management	4.71	9.12	- 2.186	.029
Satisfaction with the colleagues	7.9	12.54	- 2.771	.006

Respondents with the symptoms of psychological distress are characterized by significantly lower values for subjective success, meaningfulness of life, socio-psychological climate, satisfaction with the colleagues and management compared to respondents without signs of burnout or stress. The profiles describing what respondents from two groups think about their activity differ significantly. For the participants with distress, their current activity is less beloved ($Z = - 2.817$; $p = 0.005$), interesting ($Z = - 2.290$; $p = 0.022$), diverse ($Z = - 2.097$; $p = 0.036$), peaceful ($Z = -2.935$; $p = 0.003$), promising ($Z = - 2.326$; $p = 0.020$), dynamic ($Z = - 2.107$; $p = 0.035$) and definitely stressful ($Z = - 3.087$; $p = 0.002$), in comparison with the participants without distress. To obtain a generalized characteristic of the activities of our respondents, we factorized the estimates different in two groups with the use of the varimax method (Table 3). After 3 iterations, a 2-factor solution that describes 62.7 % of the data was obtained.

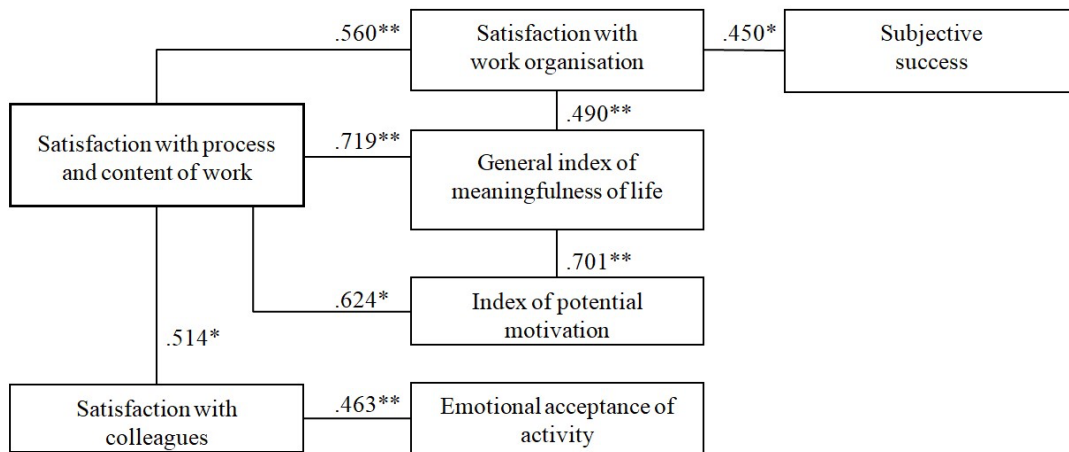
Table 3. The results of factor analysis of SD scales, different in two groups (N = 65)

SD Scales	Factor 1 variance % 36.4	SD Scales	Factor 2 variance % 26.2
Hateful – beloved	0.802	Conflicting - Peaceful	0.903
Interesting – boring	- 0.785	Nervous (stressful) - calm	0.811
Monotonous – diverse	0.773		
Promising – unpromising	- 0.700		
Sedentary – dynamic	0.421		0.494
<i>Factor labels</i>			
“Emotional acceptance of activity”		“Comfort of joint activity”	

The first factor, conditionally named as “emotional acceptance of activity”, allows us to state that the respondents described their current activity either as “beloved, interesting, diverse, and promising”, or as “hateful, boring, monotonous, and unpromising”. The second factor, in our opinion, describes the “comfort of joint activity” that might be “nervous and conflicting” or “peaceful and calm”. It is

interesting that the scale “sedentary - dynamic” loaded on both factors. Perhaps inactivity can boost the stress of joint activities.

Correlation analysis of the main indicators in the two selected groups made it possible to identify the “key” indicators, that lay the basis for all the other relationships discovered in the study. In the group of respondents with distress, such indicator is satisfaction with the process and content of work. It is associated with the meaningfulness of life, the index of potential motivation, the factor of emotional acceptance of activity, and also correlates with satisfaction with the work organization (Figure 1).



Note: Hereinafter: * – correlation at 0.05; ** – correlation at 0.01

Figure 1. Correlation constellation for a group of respondents who showed signs of distress

The central indicator in a group of respondents with positive well-being is socio-psychological climate (Figure 2). It has the largest number of connections both with similar variables (satisfaction with the colleagues) and variables describing the organization and characteristics of the activity.

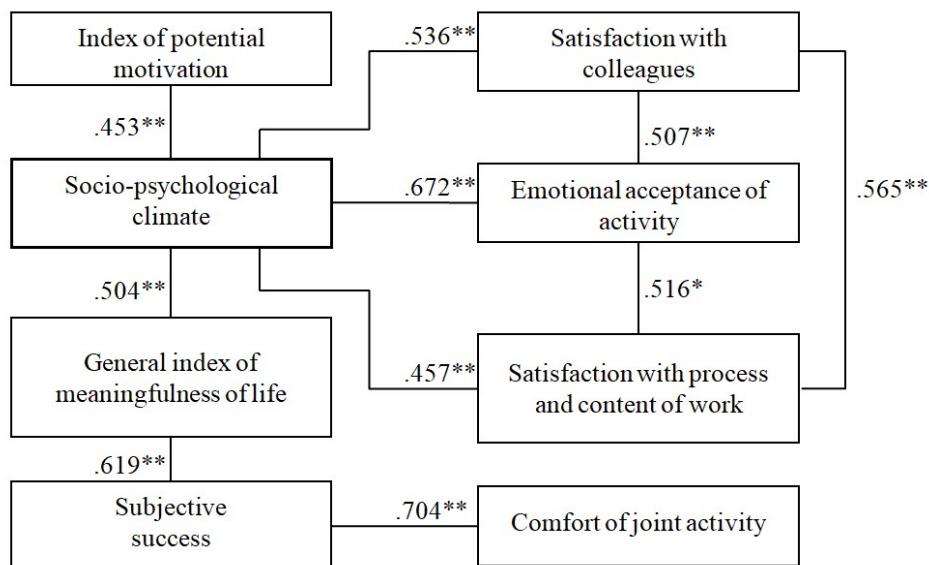


Figure 2. Correlation constellation for a group of respondents without signs of distress

The comparative analysis of the “basic” indicators of the correlation constellations obtained on the groups of “prosperous” respondents and those “with distress” reflect different significance of various life components. “Prosperous” respondents demonstrate “positive relations with others”, which is expressed in high assessment of the socio-psychological climate, satisfaction with the colleagues and relations with the management (Table 2). It is possible that the psychological well-being of the participants in this group is ensured by the sense of security and mutual assistance, by security and comfort, openness and freedom of communication, ability to contribute to the development of the group and make mistakes without fear to be punished (Figure 2). It should be taken into account that the sample consists of medical students and military personnel, and the ability to interact with other people is one of important factors. Interesting data were obtained in the second group, including respondents with the signs of distress. The “key” indicator organizing all the others is the "process and content of work", which is associated with the general index of meaningfulness of life, satisfaction with the colleagues, and emotional acceptance of one's activities (Figure 1). Perhaps dissatisfaction with the current activities leads to the loss of the meaning of the present, to stress and the feeling of emotional exhaustion.

7. Conclusion

The early stage of professional development is characterized by the formation of professional identity, which involves understanding what activity means and becoming aware of subjectively significant values. The research results show that there are differences in the assessment of their professional activity by young people at the early stages of professionalization, depending on whether they experience signs of negative conditions (stress and burnout symptoms) or not. These differences were manifested in semantic characteristics of their work, which reflected the content of their activity.

Respondents belonging to different groups according to the degree of psychological well-being, explained in our study by the presence or absence of pronounced stress and burnout symptoms, can be described as oriented to the well-being of the social environment they belong to, or as “individualists” that value the organization and content of professional activity.

The results of the research may be applied in the design of measures aimed at the formation of prosperous and successful professionals.

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