

**PRRAEPGDA 2020****Personal and Regulatory Resources in Achieving Educational and Professional Goals in the Digital Age****PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGENCY AS A CONDITION FOR ACHIEVING PERSONAL IDENTITY AT THE STUDENT AGE**

Irina Valer'evna Boyazitova (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Pyatigorsk State University, 9 Kalinin Av., 357532 Pyatigorsk, Russia, biv\_pglu@mail.ru

***Abstract***

The article is devoted to the study of psychological factors and conditions for achieving personal identity at the student age. The methodological basis of the research is the conceptual provisions of the theory of integral individuality of Merlin, integrative psychology of development of Belous and Boyazitova, and the theoretical model of personal potential of Leontiev. The methodological tools were aimed at studying the status of personal identity and the development of multi-level properties of agency, including the assessment of psychological stability, self-regulation, styles of reaction to changes, cynicism, hostility, and aggressiveness of the individual. As a result of experimental work, it was found that for students with different status of personal identity, the development of multi-level properties of personal and socio-psychological levels of agency is characterized by statistically significant differences. It was stated that the status of personal identity at the student age is determined by the development of multi-level properties of agency: the higher the degree of expression of purposefulness, focus on a meaningful life, satisfaction with self-realization, moral and ethical responsibility, confidence in behaviour, active styles of reaction to changes, the higher the status of personal identity, i.e. the higher the level of agency, the higher the status of personal identity. The technology of implementing the program of psychological support for the development of agency, including the formation of personal stability, self-regulation, active styles of responding to social changes, confident behaviour, is theoretically justified.

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**Keywords:** Psychological support, student age, personal identity, agency, psychological stability, self-regulation.

## 1. Introduction

Due to the global identity crisis, which is steadily gaining strength in the 21st century, the problem of achieving personal identity is a problem of state significance, directly related to the training of competitive and highly qualified specialists in accordance with world standards and advanced technologies. Taking into account the goals and objectives of the federal project "Young Professionals," implemented within the framework of the national project "Education," psychological science and higher education are designed to create conditions that accompany the formation of personal identity, ensuring the unity and continuity of various personal entities, self-determination, personality and regulation of social activity, and the ability to maintain their integrity.

The phenomenon of identity is widely discussed in different studies, which note that personal identity, being the pinnacle of multidimensional personality identities, is a complex process that performs systemic, regulatory, semantic functions realized in agentic activity aimed at self-determination, support and confirmation of personality identity (Fomenko, 2017; Maksimenko, 2018; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Tuchina, 2015; Schneider, 2019; Znakov & Ryabikina, 2017).

The studies emphasize the fact that the consideration of personal identity as a form of manifestation of agency allows us to pose and solve the problem of consistency of the structural components of personal identity in the context of the study of agency as a manifestation of activity, the ability to self-determination, self-regulation and self-improvement. At the same time, consideration of issues related to the study of patterns and conditions for achieving personal identity is presented in scientific works, and still remains urgent (Belinskaya, 2018; Kovaleva et al., 2016; Kolantaevskaya, 2017; Kuzmin, 2016; Marcia, 2002; Marcia & Friedman, 1970; Rodstein, 2018; Vignoles, 2011; Zaitseva, 2015).

In our work, considering identity as a form in which an active agent acts, we for the first time explore the problem of the development of an agent as a basic construct for achieving a stable personal identity in the context of organizing psychological support aimed at increasing agentic activity at student age.

## 2. Problem Statement

Student age, according to the main stages of development of the agent, is related to the stage of formation of personal agency, the period of acquisition of maturity of agentic characteristics, achievement of optimal internal consistency, certainty, integrity. At the same time, due to the imperfection and inconsistency of agentic characteristics, the processes of achieving personal identity in student age require deep internal work aimed at overcoming the contradictions associated with the formation of personal agency, which it is important to resolve in order to successfully enter the stage of full-fledged agency at the stage of early adulthood.

The current contradictions related to the existing opportunities at the university for the formation of a stable personal identity and the absence of special programs of psychological support aimed at the development of agency at student age, determined the problem of our research, which consists in

establishing a system of factors that regulate the formation of personal identity, defining the conditions that ensure the success of the development of agency at student age.

### **3. Research Questions**

The stated problem is directly related to the formulation of the following research questions:

- what are the features of the development of agency in students with different status of personal identity,
- what are the determinative relations between the parameters of personal identity and the multi-level properties of agency,
- what is the technology for implementing the program of psychological support for the development of agency as a condition for achieving a stable personal identity at the student age.

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

The purpose of this research is to develop a technology for organizing effective psychological support aimed at optimizing the process of development of agency as a condition for the formation of a stable personal identity at the student age. Achieving this goal will allow us to resolve both the personal contradictions associated with the peculiarities of age development, and the contradictions between the need to achieve maturity of the agentic characteristics and the lack of special psychological and pedagogical technologies aimed at developing the agentic activity of students in the educational space of the University.

### **5. Research Methods**

Comparing the concepts of "agency" and "agent", the research notes their specificity and not reducibility to each other, however, it is emphasized that the category "agent" is the basis for the analysis of the category "agency". We study the problem of the formation of a stable personal identity at the student age, relying on the conceptual provisions of the theory of integral personality of Merlin (1986), integrative psychology of development of Belous and Boyazitova (2018), a conceptual model of personal potential of Leontiev (2016). Studies conducted in the school of Merlin (1986), Belous and Boyazitova (2018), reveal, in essence, agentic characteristics, a model of personal potential of Leontiev is a form of manifestation of agentic activity based on self-determination, self-regulation, self-organization of a person, through personal responsibility.

Based on the understanding that the semantic essence of identity consists in the features of the relationship between the individual and social aspects of identity, and their consistency is determined by the agentic characteristics, based on the multi-level structure of integral individuality, we have identified the personal and socio-psychological levels of agency.

The personal level of agency, in accordance with the functional content of personal identity, aimed at ensuring the unity of the system organization of the agent, the certainty of human relations with the world, the ability to carry out personal regulation of social activity, includes parameters that characterize personal stability and self-regulatory abilities.

Based on the understanding that the semantic essence of identity consists in the features of the relationship between the individual and social aspects of identity, and their consistency is determined by the agentic characteristics, based on the multi-level structure of integral individuality, we distinguished the personal and socio-psychological levels of agency.

The personal level of agency, in accordance with the functional content of personal identity, aimed at ensuring the unity of the systemic organization of the agent, the certainty of a person's relationship with the world, the ability to carry out personal regulation of social activity, includes parameters characterizing personal stability and self-regulatory abilities.

In our study, personal sustainability in terms of content is represented by individual psychological characteristics that reflect the meaning of life orientations and self-efficacy of the individual. Based on the heterarchical structure of self-regulation of Leontiev, connected with the spiritual essence of a person, based on the moral-semantic mental organization of a person, and reflecting the value-worldview level of being, self-regulatory abilities are studied from the point of view of the development of moral stability and moral and ethical responsibility.

The socio-psychological level of subjectivity, in accordance with the idea that the achievement of personal identity occurs in the process of confirming the behaviour of significant "Others," is considered in the aspect of interpersonal relations.

Under our guidance, on the basis of Pyatigorsk State University, we conducted a study of the factors and conditions for the development of agency as a basic construct for achieving personal identity at the student age. The study involved 176 students aged from 18 to 22 years.

Using the research methodology of the structural organization of personal identity by Nikishina and Petrash (2014) we studied the status characteristic of identity. The methodological tools aimed at the study of psychological stability are the test of life orientations by Leontiev (2000) and the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer et al., 1996). Psychodiagnostic tools aimed at studying the parameters of self-regulation are presented by the method "Friend-adviser" by Veselova (2010) and the questionnaire "Diagnostics of the level of moral and ethical responsibility of the individual" (Timoshchuk, 2004). Using the questionnaire "Styles of response to changes" by Bazarov and Sycheva (2012) and the hostility scale by Cook and Medley (1954), a study of the socio-psychological level of agency was conducted.

A statistical comparison of the parameters of agency was carried out using t-Student's criterion, an assessment of the relationship between the parameters characterizing personal identity and multi-level properties of the agency was carried out on the basis of correlation analysis using the r-Spearman criterion.

## **6. Findings**

During the study of the structural organization of personal identity, three groups of subjects were identified. More than half of the respondents (53%) made up the group with the status "Diffuse Identity", characterized by a low level of consistency of the structural components of identity. The second group (38 %) with the status of "Moratorium of Identity" is represented by students with an average level of consistency in the structural components of identity. The third group (9 %) – with the status of "Sustainable Identity".

Statistical comparison of the parameters of agency in the groups "Diffuse identity" – "Sustainable identity," "Moratorium of identity" – "Sustainable identity" made it possible to establish both general universal trends and differences in the development of multi-level properties of personal and socio-psychological levels of agency. At the same time, the dominance of differences at the personal level in the manifestation of properties characterizing psychological stability and self-regulation of personality was found.

Statistical analysis revealed a higher level of development of personal and socio-psychological agency in the group "Sustainable Identity" in comparison with the groups "Diffuse Identity" and "Moratorium of Identity".

Statistically significant differences in the comparison of the groups "Diffuse identity" and "Sustainable identity" amounted to 55 % and were identified by the following indicators of agency: goals in life ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); life process ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); life productivity ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); reflection on moral and ethical situations ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); intuition in the moral and ethical sphere ( $p \leq 0,001$ ); existential aspect of responsibility ( $p \leq 0.01$ ); altruistic emotions ( $p \leq 0.001$ ); moral and ethical values ( $p \leq 0.001$ ); moral and ethical responsibility ( $p \leq 0.001$ ); conservative style ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); innovative style ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

Comparative analysis established between the groups "Moratorium of Identity" and "Diffuse Identity" 35 % of differences in such indicators of agency as goals in life ( $p \leq 0.001$ ), locus of control – life ( $p \leq 0.05$ ), intuition in the moral and ethical sphere ( $p \leq 0,001$ ), existential aspect of responsibility ( $p \leq 0.001$ ), altruistic emotions ( $p \leq 0.001$ ), moral and ethical responsibility ( $p \leq 0.001$ ), innovative style ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). In other words, the higher the status of personal identity, the higher the level of development of agency at student age.

The obtained results actualized the problem of studying the patterns of achieving a stable personal identity among students, which is possible on the basis of assessing the relationship between the parameters of agency and personal identity. As a result of the correlation analysis, positive inter-correlations were established at the personal level with variables characterizing personality stability in five out of six cases, which amounted to 83.3 %: goals in life ( $r = 0.52$ ), life process ( $r = 0.46$ ), life productivity ( $r = 0.64$ ), the locus of control – I ( $r = 0.56$ ), the locus of control - life ( $r = 0.48$ ). Six out of seven positive correlations were found with personality self-regulation variables (85.7 %): morality index ( $r = 0.68$ ), reflection on moral and ethical situations ( $r = 0.42$ ), intuition in the moral and ethical sphere ( $r = 0.47$ ), the existential aspect of responsibility ( $r = 0.56$ ), moral and ethical values, moral and ethical responsibility ( $r = 0.58$ ). Five of seven intercorrelations were revealed between the indicator of personal identity and indicators of the socio-psychological level of agency, of which four were negative intercorrelations (71.4 %): innovative style ( $r = 0.62$ ), conservative style ( $r = -0.42$ ), cynicism ( $r = -0.64$ ), aggressiveness ( $r = -0.56$ ), hostility ( $r = -0.59$ ).

A qualitative analysis of the results of intercorrelations made it possible to establish the following patterns in the relationship of personal identity and the multilevel properties of agency at student age:

– the higher the degree of severity of stability and self-regulation of personality, namely, indicators of life-sense orientations, locus of control, an index of morality, ethical responsibility, and active styles of responding to change, positive attitude towards others, the higher the status of personal identity;

- the lower the degree of expression of such socio-psychological properties of agency as passive styles of reaction to changes, cynicism, aggression, hostility, the higher the status of personal identity;
- the higher the level of agency, the higher the status of personal identity, i.e. agency acts as a basic construct in achieving personal identity at the student age.

Based on the results of an empirical study of factors and patterns of achieving a stable personal identity, a program of psychological support for students has been developed aimed at developing psychological stability, the ability to self-regulation, the formation of active styles of response to social changes, confident behaviour. The technology of the program implementation is represented by the main directions, tasks, content, forms and methods of developing influence.

The task of the first direction of the program "Development of psychological stability": the formation of the ability to set goals and build a life perspective, reflection of life orientations and the development of responsibility for self-made decisions. The content of developing classes is aimed at developing the skills of constructive goal setting, planning and achieving goals, understanding the meaning and value of your life, responsibility for your choices.

The task of the second direction of the program "Development of self-regulation": the development of moral stability and moral and ethical responsibility that ensure the regulation of individual behaviour in situations of self-determination, decision-making and opposition to difficult life circumstances. The content of developing classes is aimed at awareness of moral preferences in situations of moral choice, development of moral stability, moral reflection and intuition, moral and ethical responsibility, altruistic emotions, and ethical values.

The task of the third direction of the program "Socio-psychological development": the formation of confident behaviour as an alternative to aggressive behaviour and training reflexive skills to respond adequately to emerging changes in activity, in interpersonal interaction. The content of developing classes is aimed at forming the skill of awareness of alternative aggressive feelings, taking an active confident position, and responsibility for choosing a way to respond to social changes.

The key condition for the implementation of the program is the inclusion of students in dynamic activities in self-knowledge, self-diagnosis, introspection, existing difficulties and personal resources, intrapersonal contradictions in situations of moral choice, prevailing stereotypes of behaviour, styles of response to emerging social changes that ensure psychological stability and self-regulation of the person, active and confident social position.

Development classes were held in the form of a briefing with elements of training, individual advice. The main methods used in the implementation of the program were: group discussion, reflection training, modeling of graphic images, visual modeling (method of directed imagination), metaphorical programming.

In order to verify the effectiveness of the psychological support program, a control section of the level of formation of personal identity and the development of agency was conducted in a group of students with an unstable personal identity "Diffuse identity" after psychological exposure.

Statistical comparative analysis made it possible to establish significant differences in the "Diffuse Identity" group before and after the implementation of the formative experiment, both in terms of personality identity ( $p \leq 0.001$ ) and in terms of the multi-level properties of agency (66.7 %): goals in life

( $p \leq 0.05$ ); life productivity ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); the locus of control – I ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); morality index ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); reflection on moral and ethical situations ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); existential aspect of responsibility ( $p \leq 0.01$ ); moral and ethical values ( $p \leq 0.01$ ); moral and ethical responsibility ( $p \leq 0.001$ ); conservative style ( $p \leq 0.01$ ); implementing style ( $p \leq 0.05$ ); cynicism” ( $p \leq 0.01$ ).

As a result of the implementation of the development program in this group, qualitative changes were identified in the status of personal identity and in the development of the properties of the personal and socio-psychological levels of agency, which indicates the importance of psychological support for the development of agency as a fundamental condition for achieving personal identity at the student age.

## 7. Conclusion

Based on the theoretical and experimental provisions of modern research, considering identity as the form in which the active agent acts, it has been experimentally established that the development of agency is the basic factor determining the formation of a stable personal identity at the student age.

The determining role in the formation of a stable personal identity at the student age belongs to the personal level of agency. Achieving personal identity is stably associated with psychological stability and self-regulation, i.e. with determination, focus on the future, productive and meaningful life, satisfaction with self-realization, with a sense of confidence and conviction in the ability to organize life according to one's own choice, moral stability, moral reflection, moral intuition, existential responsibility, altruistic emotions, ethical values. The results of the study expand the understanding of the determination and patterns of the formation of a stable personal identity at the student age.

It is determined that the process of formation of a stable personal identity depends on a number of conditions, the key of which is the organization of psychological support for students with an unstable personal identity aimed at the development of agency, i.e. self-determination of personality.

The study contributes to the development and solution of theoretical problems of personal identity formation and development of agency at different stages of ontogenesis carried out within the framework of systemic and agentic approaches. The results of the study can be used in the activities of the psychological service of the university in the development of corrective and developmental programs for the formation of a stable personal identity, the development of agentic activity, while consulting an individual and in group work with students during the period of adaptation and crises of professional training.

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