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EXISTENTIAL BASES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SMALL
SOCIAL GROUPS

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of possibilities to using existential foundations for conflict resolution in small social groups. Special attention is paid to existential givens and moduses, which allow overcoming crisis phenomena in relations between group members and achieving a balance. This happens due to realization of the potential of synergy of uniquenesses and reduction of negative influence of dissynergy. By concrete examples of defense mechanisms: symbiosis, proximity, social conformism, modus I-TY, I-social, the possibilities of conflict resolution are considered. Existential givens, due to the fact that they allow creating a model of constructive, meaningful human life, can act as regulators of personal behavior in a situation of conflict in small social groups. Existential mechanisms and modus operandi, in their turn, make it possible to realize the huge potential of synergy of uniquenesses and reduce the negative impact of dissynergy in the process of overcoming crisis situations and instability.

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1. Introduction

The current state of development of the world community determines the search for new means of solving important socio-political problems concerning issues of various types of conflict situations, ranging from political and legal to those that arise against the background of purely interpersonal relationships (Semenova et al., 2020).

It is obvious that conflicts have always existed, exist now and will exist in the future, they are an integral part of human relationships, and the possibility of their occurrence is present in all spheres. Special attention should be paid to conflicts that appear in small social groups, as they lead to the termination or deterioration of relationships, to domestic, family disputes at the level of interpersonal communication; in the production sphere they lead to the deterioration of productivity, teamwork, disruption of the negotiation process, reduction of motivation.

However, it should be noted that conflict situations have positive sides, which are often ignored by society. In small social groups, conflicts with others, as a rule, become a reflection of internal personal confrontation, the constructive solution of which leads to personal growth and positively affects a person's self-esteem (Diamond, 2021). And, since conflict situations can relate to the deep layers of human essence, i.e. be a reflection of existential problems, the existential paradigm seems to be the most effective for the study of conflict interaction.

In the context of the existential paradigm, the resolution of conflict situations in small social groups relies on the subject's knowledge of objective reality, as well as his or her own subjective perceptions of the world. As a result, the synergetic understanding of the whole spectrum of interests, awareness of different perceptions of the same things, of one's identity, of the order of coexistence, norms of behavior, and justice can contribute to the restoration of peace and the resolution of emerging differences under certain conditions.

The ontology of conflict and peace in the existential paradigm defines the semantic reality of relations in small social groups. They are built on the clash and coordination of interests, synergy and dissynergy of uniquenesses, manifested through the structures of identity, solidarity, as well as through power relations and the formation of models for maintaining balance. (V. F. Tenischeva et al., 2014; B. F. Tenischeva et al., 2021)

Therefore, taking into account the above, the study of peculiarities of using the existential approach as a synthesis of ideas, principles and concepts of existential philosophy and existential psychology for conflict resolution in subjective-critical difficult situations of small groups determines the relevance, theoretical and practical significance of the chosen topic of research (Deruzhinskaya & Somko, 2016).

From the psychological point of view, there are many works of domestic and foreign scientists, such as Elizabeth D. Hutchison, Stewart L. Tubbs, John O. Burtis, Paul D. Turman, Geyko E. Turman, Geiko E.G., Radysh I.V., Lyapunova T.V.

The study of different theoretical views of existential psychology, reflection of scientific ideas in existentialism about internal conflicts is the focus of scientific research of Diamond Stephen A., Galani Maria, Miętkiewicz Rafal, Lvov A.A., Faerman M.I., Kuklinov N.A.

Existential, contextual and procedural factors of settlement of various social conflicts are analyzed in detail by Minabutdinov I.V., Pryanikova N.I., Marchenko S.A., Osipova D.A., Karen Weixel Dixon, Paul Randolph.

Despite the fact that recently existential psychology has been actively developing and constantly expanding the scientific field of research, there are very few empirical works devoted to the study of conflict-existential states and approaches to their overcoming. On the one hand, this is due to some uncertainty and blurriness of the object of study of "existential states" and, on the other hand, to insufficient development of methodological tools for detailed analysis of this subject field (Andreeva et al., 2017).

So, taking into account the above-mentioned facts, the aim of the article is to consider the possibilities of constructive and successful conflict resolution in small social groups on the basis of existential givens, mechanisms and modus operandi, which act as regulators of individual's behavior in crisis situations.

2. Problem Statement

In social sciences, conflict is traditionally interpreted as a sharp aggravation of contradictions and a clash between two or more participants in the process of solving a problem that has business or personal significance for each of the parties (Omelaenko, 2019).

In psychology, conflict is understood as a collision of incompatible, oppositely directed tendencies in human consciousness, in interpersonal or intergroup relations. In turn, this is accompanied by acute negative experiences. The traditional subject of psychological study of conflicts is conflict patterns of internal personal and interpersonal levels (Kirschner, 2020).

The internal structure of a small social group is determined by two levels. Firstly, it is universal value-normative structures of individuals who are part of it, which are formed by ideology and traditions. And secondly, it is individualized forms of subjective designation and comprehension of situations, relations and connections, originating in the process of experiencing the world. Hence, we believe that the interaction of cognitive and existential realities in a small group creates a linchpin for the resolution of conflict situations.

3. Research Questions

Taking into account the fact that within the existential paradigm, the conflict in a small social group is a confrontation between existential givens of its members, one assumes that the basis for conflict resolution can be regulators of personal behavior. Let us distinguish their two main types:

- i. Regulating human behavior in a situation that is directly connected with the influence of existential givenness on it. For example, dismissal from work, loss of a close person, financial losses can activate existential anxiety and, as a consequence, conflict related to one of the givens.

- ii. Regulating personal behavior in a situation that is not directly related to the awareness of existential givenness. They are derived from defense mechanisms generated by confrontation with existential givenness.

4. Purpose of the Study

Let us consider the possible action of these regulators within the framework of specific practical situations, for example, symbiosis. Often in small social groups, conflicts are generated by the inability of the object to be in a symbiotic relationship with other participants. This causes resentment, accusations, even the search for a new, more adapted object (Buffardi, 2021). But, on the other hand, by involving conflicting parties in a common cause, the mechanisms of mutualism of symbiosis are put into action, in which it is beneficial to both participants. As a result, in the process of working on a common project, opponents have a more or less wide field of common interests, they get to know each other better, get used to cooperate and solve problems positively, which allows if not resolving, but significantly smoothing out the conflict situation.

This example clearly demonstrates the potential for the dissynergy of individuals' uniqueness to resolve conflicts in small social groups.

Also symbiotic relationship can most effectively contribute to the manifestation of synergetic capabilities of different personalities to solve the conflict in small social groups. In this case, we are talking about mutual complementation of individuals, which implies reliance on such abilities of the partner, which the person himself does not possess (Längle & Klaassen, 2021). Therefore, creative people are often not inclined to monotonous, routine, technical work, which in the process of cooperation and implementation of projects quite often leads to conflicts with partners of other internal self-organization. However, both are needed for the success of the case. Mutual complementation is especially important for the formation of small social groups, which in this case often turn out to be very strong. Taking into account a skillful use of not only the abilities, but also the shortcomings of people who are closely related to each other will contribute to the prevention, avoidance of conflict, and, in case of its occurrence, a speedy resolution.

Another example of the manifestation of the potential of synergetics is the possibility of solving the conflict caused by isolationism, which is a given fundamental that determines the alienation of man from the world and others. This provokes the third existential conflict between isolation and the need for protection (Salazar, 2021). In this case, the modus I-YOU is effective, within which the existential givenness "closeness" is manifested. Owing to this modus, one of the conflicting parties demonstrates the ability to empathize and sympathize, to understand the internal state of the individual. And it implies the demonstration of the necessary compassion for the partner, readiness to provide him/her with practical assistance. The use of existential givenness "closeness" allows excluding unmotivated hostility, aggressiveness, impoliteness from mutual relations.

The transition to the I-You modus provides for deep personal contact: mutual understanding, recognition of the other person as he or she is, with his or her strengths and weaknesses, peculiarities and uniquenesses. The conflict in this case may not be resolved only if the conflicting person is unwilling to move toward intimacy.

5. Research Methods

At the same time, it should be noted that it is hardly possible to permanently resolve a conflict while in a state of intimacy. Also, this modus has a certain limited acceptance by the individual due to the presence of a number of restrictions inherent in the society in which it exists. It requires great effort, concentration and is often dangerous to the psyche. The exception is the situation when it comes to communication in a family circle, between a man and a woman. Intimacy is a necessary component of the solution of arising difficulties and contradictions.

Quite often, in small groups, conflicts erupt as a result of members competing for a certain status and approval of their ideas. Each member of the group has his or her own opinion on a strategy and a direction. If an experienced leader with sufficient authority guides the group, its members gain the ability to successfully solve problems together, effectively perform tasks individually. And as a team, they are able to effectively assign roles and responsibilities to each other.

In this case, such existential defense mechanism of an individual as social conformism/submission to the leader (according to E. Fromm (Erich, 1939), which allows a person to avoid loneliness, is a means of merging with the masses and a method of inclusion in society. This is actually expressed in submission to the leader-authority and acts ahead of the conflict.

If the group is headed by an inexperienced leader or one whose authority is questioned, it is impossible to solve the conflict by means of social conformism. In this case, there is a dissynergy of uniquenesses, which reduces the effectiveness of existence and work of a small social group as a whole and each of its participants separately, provokes even greater hostility and the deepening of contradictions.

6. Findings

We assume that this kind of conflict, when it is impossible to exclude a participant from the group, can be solved by using the existential modus "identification of oneself with the social self". This modus represents an attempt to avoid anxiety, to "escape" to socially determined standards of communication, to create a socially desirable image, a role of a professional or family.

Within this modus operandi, the individual is concerned with his or her position in the group, where elements of a hostile environment occur as well:

- i. one seeks to find compromises in coexistence with other group members in the context of objectified values, relationships and forms of communication;
- ii. one realizes the need to "reckon" with the social circumstances of life, to which it tries to find an optimal (ideological) way of social response;
- iii. one attempts to find their place in the group and make their choice to improve it (ideological rise of relations) or to ignore a number of norms that provoke conflict situations.

In view of this, the following conclusions can be drawn to summarize the above

7. Conclusion

Existential givennesses, due to the fact that they allow creating a model of constructive, meaningful human life, can act as regulators of personal behavior in a situation of conflict in small social groups. Existential mechanisms and modus operandi, in their turn, make it possible to realize the huge potential of synergy of uniquenesses and reduce the negative impact of dissynergy in the process of overcoming crisis situations and instability.

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