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Formal-dynamic Personality Traits of Psychological Stability in Educational and Professional Cadets' Activities

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Abstract

The article represents the formal-dynamic personality traits of a military institute cadets as the basis of the psychological stability formation. The study of stability factors is especially important for groups of people whose future profession is associated with frequent stress, challenges and non-standard situations. The relevance of the study is due to the absence of unambiguous interpretation of the concept "psychological stability" in modern psychology. Rusalov's questionnaire was used as the main empirical method of defining of the formal-dynamic personality traits level, which was correlated with the key concept. A study of the formal-dynamic characteristic of the of cadets' personalities made it possible to determine the formation of stability in the communicative, psychomotor and intellectual fields and to identify prospects for the organization of professional and educational activities of cadets. The psychological stability requires an adequate response to external stress, selectivity in social contacts, strict adherence to one's own attitudes and principles. Further work in organizing the professional and educational activities of the cadets of a military institute can be reorganized on the basis of the results obtained in this study. In particular, the corrective work with cadets who showed a low level of the psychological stability may be done.

Keywords: cadets, psychological stability, formal-dynamic personality traits, human educational behavior, stress, educational activities.

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Introduction

Modern world with its goals for success, self-realization and excellence not only transforms the style of our life, but also determines the level of willingness to overcome difficulties and achieve results. An important role in this, of course, is played by such a parameter as psychological stability, the realization of needs in personal growth and self-realization. In this regard, studying at a military institute includes not only mastery of the profession, but also the development of a number of competencies – social and psychological, contributing to the formation of cadets sustainability as the basis of personal growth and self-realization, as well as the success of future professional activities. For the future military, psychological stability and skill maintain a state of subjective well-being is one of fundamental conditions for successful work and professional activity.

For the first time, the problem of sustainability was mentioned in a report by Bozhovich (1976). Then the psychological stability was started to be studied as emotional stability (Mitina, 1992), moral stability (Chudnovsky, 1981), and the stability of forms of behavior (Bozhovich, 1976), stability in stressful conditions and in space missions' preparation (Gurevich, 1970). In Reber's large psychological dictionary (Reber, 2003), sustainability is understood as reliable and consistent human behavior.

But in Russian psychological tradition, authors were more interested in studying the concept of emotional stability. For example, Marishchuk, Platonov and Pletnitsky (1969) described the emotional stability of a person as the features of his or her mental processes that manifest themselves independently of human activities. According to Abolin's papers (1987), stability is a characteristic of a person, manifested during a period of hard work, when emotional processes harmoniously interact with each other and as a result the person is able to achieve the goal successfully. The author also noted that emotional stability is a systemic concept that determines the emotional behavior and actions of a person. The author determined the result of the activity as its main criterion.

We can conclude, that at the present stage of development of Russian psychological science, the psychological stability is understood differently by researchers mentioned, that can be seen even at the level of choice of the term. It is most often determined through emotional behavior and the result of activity. Formal-dynamic personality traits as the basis for the formation of psychological stability have not been comprehensively described properly so far. More than that, analyzing experimental studies of psychological stability, many authors note that there is no clear connection between emotional stability and psychological characteristics of a person, age and work experience. Therefore, some researchers came to the conclusion that the role of biological prerequisites in the formation of resistance is overestimated.

The relevance of the study is also determined by the fact that in the categorical apparatus of modern psychology there is no unambiguous interpretation of the concept of "psychological stability", which often considered only from the position of successful adaptation to the environment or stability / instability of the emotional sphere, which does not give us full understanding of the mechanisms, factors and criteria, which help persons to form the psychological stability.

The fact that the subjects of our study are the cadets of the Russian military institute – that is a specific, closed, not integrated in some public processes social group consisting mainly of men – can produce a small inaccuracy in the results of the study. It may be due to both the social heterogeneity of the group and the mental and psychological differences of cadets (starting from personality traits, mental level and ending with different motives for entering a military institute).

Purpose and objectives of the study

The objective of the study is to identify the formal-dynamic personality traits which form the psychological stability of the cadet's personality at military institute stage training.

Literature review

Labor psychology researchers studied emotional (not psychological) stability. They consider it as the ability of a person to maintain the stability of mental and psychomotor processes under conditions of strong psychogenic influences. The internal conditions of stability include emotional reactivity, properties of the nervous system, as well as emotional characteristics acquired during social activity. The mutual influence of the properties of the nervous system and stability was investigated by Gurevich (1970) and Nebylitsin (1966). Thus, Nebylitsyn, systematizing the concept of mental stability, included it into long-term endurance, mental stress resistance, noise immunity, low distractibility, a constructive reaction to external stimuli, attention switchability.

Abolin (1987) represents the psychological determinants of emotional stability, such as anxiety, motivation for success, avoidance of failures, and worldview.

Medvedev (1982) considered the phenomenon of psychological stability in the context of adaptation to the information component of the social environment. The author outlined three levels of mechanisms of psychological stability. The first level is determined by the biological regulation of adaptation processes; the second level is determined by traits and characteristics of physiological reactions, the third level is oriented on causal relationships that affect the ability to adapt. According to another author, Basarov

(1981), the psychological stability must be defined, on the one hand, as an integral system of human behavior, on the other – as a characteristic of independent components and levels.

Military psychologists understand the psychological stability as the ability to withstand mental stress. According to Eliseev's and Korchemny's paper (2000), a little mental stability is a systemic quality, which manifests itself in the ability to adequately reflect reality in complicated, emergency situations. The main components of the psychological stability, according to the authors, include motility, will, intellectual abilities, cognitive processes, motivation, and emotional sphere of personality.

Focusing on the work of Rubinstein (2002), a group of authors (Chudnovsky, Antsiferova, & Lomov) consider the psychological stability as a result of human development. Since the concept of psychological stability is closely related to the principle of immutability, Chudnovsky (1981) focuses on the influence of the type of nervous system on the formation of stability in the process of human development. For example, the author explains the indicator of nervous processes' inertia as low endurance, distractibility, impatience, and emotional lability. Chudnovsky (1981) stressed the idea that at the same time, the stability can be changed in accordance with a person's needs and it is inextricably linked with the integrity of the individual. The author supposes that it is the psychological stability that ensures the quality of human life without leading its level to decline.

In foreign psychological studies, the phenomenon of psychological stability is considered in the context of human endurance and psychological resistance, thereby the importance of the personality factor becomes obvious. American psychologist Kobasa (1979) supposes that a psychologically stable person has enough resources to withstand various kinds of negative influences of life and society. They described three indicators of it: first is control (a sense of control over their lives, ability to choose a line of behavior in extreme circumstances, belief that a one can control events and influence them); second is involvement in activities, relationships with others and with oneself (these relationships reveal values, goals and life priorities); third is the ability to assess changes more like a challenge than a threat (a stable person tests his/her strength for plasticity, knows where to find support and energy). In this sense, the studied concept approaches in meaning to the more popularized concept – stress resistance.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the study was: the principle of determinism (Vygotsky, Leontiev, Rubinstein); the principle of unity of activity and consciousness (Antsiferova, Bozhovich, Vygotsky, Leontiev A. N., Lomov B. F., Rybalko E. F., Smirnov A. A., etc.); the principles of the psychology of the subject

(Antsiferova L. I., Ananyev B. G., Bozhovich L. I., Brushlinsky A. V., Petrovsky V. A., Chudnovskiy V. E.); the theory of openness of the system as a guarantee of its sustainability (by Galazhinsky E. V.); the provisions of the humanistic and existential-phenomenological approaches in psychology (by Vasilyuk F. E., Leontyev D. A., Maslow A., Rogers C., Fromm E., Frankl W. and others).

We used classical research methods such as theoretical analysis of the literature on the problem research; empirical methods (experiment, testing); methods of mathematical and statistical processing of results (factorial and correlation analysis, student t-test). In the empirical part of the study, we used a diagnostic complex for studying stability created by Rusalov (1999). The mathematical processing of the obtained data was carried out with the help of computer programs using Microsoft Excel packages 2010, "Statistica 6.0".

Results

The psychological stability must be understood as an adequate response to events, people, and situations. Based on the research of Marishchuk, Platonov and Pletnitsky (1969), we denote the following components of psychological stability:

- Human activity, which determines the worldview, interests, needs, forming the basis of his or her motivation;
- Knowledge and professional experience, strong-willed skills that will suggest a person the options for behavior in difficult situations;
- Some features of mental processes (attention, perception, thinking, memory, will, feelings, sensations, emotions);
- Physiological properties of a nervous system, psychomotor activity level, and a type of temperament.

When a person demonstrates the psychological stability, it means he is able to respond to external stress effectively and adequately, to treat the actions of other people selectively, and in accordance with his or her own attitudes and principles to implement the intended behavior model. This understanding of the psychological stability causes the great interest to this phenomenon in the psychology of labor and military psychology. So, the educational and professional activities of cadets of a military institute are inextricably linked with the manifestation of the psychological stability. In addition, the age of a military institute cadets is characterized by the formation of personal identity and the transition to solving adult problems on the basis of the already formed psychosocial identity, while young people tend to face a number of problems

that determine inadequate, irrational, and aggressive behavior. The interaction of cadets in an isolated team, identical in age and sex, plays an important role in their behavior formation. The daily execution of tasks related to combat training and the use of weapons is another important influencing factor of psychological stability level. This aspect of cadets' psychology is studied in Silvachev's theses (2010). Therefore, the components of psychological stability noted above, and in particular the properties of the nervous system and character, are especially relevant when organizing psychological selection, the educational process and the adaptation process among cadets of a military institute.

The study of the individual characteristics of the personality psyche, its activity, plasticity, speed of reaction is reflected in the concept of formal-dynamic traits of Rusalov. Defining the formal-dynamic (or psychodynamic) features (traits) of the psyche, Rusalov correlated them with the biological properties of a human being. Forming gradually, the formal-dynamic traits of the psyche appear as systemic qualities that combine the biological properties of a person. If the union occurs due to the commonality of neurophysiological properties, then temperament is formed; if the generalization is based on dynamic and substantial features of cognitive mechanisms, then intelligence is formed; if the dynamic and substantial characteristics of motives are combined, then a mental education is formed. Formal-dynamic traits develop and generalize as a person develops. They are mediated by biological age, as well as a change in the leading types of activity, such as study and work. The conception was represented in Rusalov's fundamental paper "Biological foundations of individual psychological differences" (Rusalov, 1999).

According to Rusalov's theory (1999), activity, plasticity, speed and sensitivity of the psyche are manifested in three areas of human activity, namely: psychomotor, intellectual and communicative areas. Based on these postulates, the author of the theory of formal-dynamic personality traits developed the "Questionnaire of the personality's formal properties", which allows psychologists to evaluate individual characteristics, the development of which is determined by biological properties. These biological, formal-dynamic or temperamental properties or traits develop and manifest themselves in standard behavioral patterns, forming the core of person's character, and they are an important condition for the regulation and adaptation ability of the personality, they produce the resource of mobilization in situations of tension.

The next stage of our research implies the diagnostics of formal-dynamic properties or traits of a military institute cadets with the help of the Rusalov's questionnaire (Rusalov, 2000). The arithmetic mean value was determined with the descriptive statistics tools and an analysis of the severity of the formal-dynamic properties of cadets in different fields was produced. Its results are reflected in Table 1.

Formal and dynamic personality traits					
Psychomotor (%)		Intellectual (%)		Communicative (%)	
Ergicity	32.68	Ergicity	40.5	Ergicity	32.95
Plasticity	33.28	Plasticity	31.35	Plasticity	29.93
Speed	34.38	Speed	32.08	Speed	31.83
Emotionality	26.68	Emotionality	29.08	Emotionality	25.4

Table 1. Formal-dynamic personality traits according to the method of Rusalov (cadets of a military institute, n = 40)

As you can see in the diagram above, such property as ergicity (mean = 40.5) or activity among cadets of a military institute is most pronounced in the intellectual sphere. Cadets demonstrate a high level of learning ability, a constant desire for activities aimed at mental and brain work, connected with a wide range of intellectual interests. It is intellectual work that cadets usually prefer to choose if they can, tending to avoid motor activity.

High plasticity level (mean = 33.28) among cadets is most pronounced in the psychomotor sphere. Flexibility is more typical for cadets, when they can switch from one physical activity to another, a tendency to various forms of physical activity and manual labor is remarkable as well. We can assume sufficient endurance of cadets in the performance of military-combat missions. Least of all cadets demonstrate communicative plasticity (mean = 29.93), which is expressed in their unwillingness to enter into new social contacts, a limited set of communicative patterns and careful thought out of actions in the process of interpersonal interaction. Temporal characteristics of the psyche (value = 33.28) are also more pronounced in the psychomotor sphere, which is reflected in the performance of physical motor operations, manual labor, and the ability of cadets to mobilize quickly if it is a necessity to perform educationally modeled combat missions.

The emotionality (mean = 29.08) of the cadets of a military institute is more vivid in the intellectual sphere. It is expressed in their emotional feelings about failures in mental educational activity, feelings about the real results of their mental studying. It is also important for them how teachers evaluate their work and success. At the same time, cadets are less likely to worry about communication failures in the process of interpersonal interaction.

Discussions

However, the subject of further research is the development of the methodology. The more accuracy can be reached in case of dividing cadets into several groups according to gender factor, social status of their families, study success or some personality features. So, the sample of subjects should be expanded and diversified by social, psychological and gender characteristics.

It would be interesting to investigate the changes in the psychological stability level in dynamics as well – is it the same for the freshmen and freshwomen and graduates? Also we have an idea that some extreme conditions, which can be referred to as "extreme stimuli", "stressors", "frustrators", "emotional" or "conflict" situations, can intensify the impact of the psychological stability (complexity of tasks given in class, information overload, lack of time, sensory or social isolation, temporary uncertainty of events, overload, danger, etc.). However, we should emphasize that it is difficult to talk about variability and dynamics now – such study needs long time and combination of instruments.

One more remark should be made here. The psychological stability is considered as a special organization of the existence of a person as a system that ensures the most effective functioning of a more complex system "person – environment" in a specific situation. It means a person can set the boundaries of the psychological stability. The definition of the psychological stability itself indicates the presence or absence of harmonious relationships of the "human being – environment" system. We can say that the cadets have not yet developed harmonious relations with their environment, which, according to the test, shows that 77% of students in this group have a tendency to various kinds of manipulations and 38% have a tendency to social contacts caution.

Conclusion

The research made has led us to a number of significant results. Among the considered formal-dynamic personality traits of the Russian military institute cadets, the most pronounced is the desire for mental work and a wide range of intellectual interests. These features could be estimated as the basis of cadets' psychological stability. Most of the cadets care about assessing the results of their mental and educational work; they are acutely experiencing situations of mental stress. Cadets quickly switch from performing one physical work to another, while most of them prefer mental labor to physical activity. Usually they don't try to establish a lot of new social contacts and don't analyze carefully the route of actions: cadets rarely worry about failures in the process of interpersonal interaction. This set of characteristics is due to the age of cadets, and the peculiarity of their social position and a number of personal factors.

Further work in organizing the professional and educational activities of the cadets of a military institute can be reorganized on the basis of the results described in the article. In the educational environment it's important to spread knowledge that a person in the process of self-realization can be a "master of the situation" and rule the situation thanks to the knowledge of his features, traits and capabilities, including typological ones. The stability of such a person and success with risky models of behavior directly depends on the maximum use of the advantages of his mental organization and the neutralization of its shortcomings, which leads to the preservation of mental and somatic health, social dysfunction and service inefficiency.

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