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Personal Development of Future Psychologists: Role of Reflection in Structure of Ego Identity

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Abstract

This study examined the ego identity and the types of reflection among students of the faculty of Psychology. To study the problem, the research methods used were as follows: Differential Diagnosis of Reflection, Method “Personal Identity”, Personality Maturity Questionnaire. Differential Diagnosis of Reflection was used to diagnose the type of reflection as a stable personality trait. It was revealed that the prevailing type of reflection of students-psychologists was systemic. Systemic reflection was the only stable indicator of the level of personality maturity. Quasi-reflection and Introspective reflection did not depend on the level of personal maturity of the respondents. It was found that students of the faculty of Psychology had mainly an average degree of congruence of ego identity. Emotional-motivational and behavioral components prevailed over the cognitive one in the structure of participants’ ego identity. Students had a satisfactory level of personality maturity. Leading student’s needs were defined as in communication, in achieving one’s goals and professional recognition. Correlation between the congruence of the ego identity and types of reflection of students-psychologists was revealed. With an average and high level of personality maturity, students valued their abilities, qualities and achievements, perceived the world and people holistically, established deep contacts with people. They strove to acquire knowledge about the world around them, showed flexibility and spontaneity in behavior, they were open to new experience and relatively independent in their actions.

Keywords: ego identity strategies, ego identity congruence, types of reflexivity (system reflexivity, introspection and quasi-reflexivity), personal maturity, professional development of psychologists.

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Introduction

The professional development of psychologists necessarily includes personal development, the achievement of personal maturity and the realization of personal potential. When training specialists of psychological support, great attention must be paid to the development of students' reflection and the achievement of positive ego identity (Klimstra et al., 2012). Awareness of all aspects of one's personality, understanding of one's resources and the discovery of "blind spots" is the foundation for high-quality professional self-actualization of psychologists.

Currently, professional activity is becoming one of the most important areas for realizing personal potential due to a significant increase in qualitative and quantitative transformations in the socio-economic life of society. At the same time, successful professional development becomes associated with the awareness and achievement of personal identity. Personal identity is understood as a formed and personally accepted image of oneself in all the diversity of the person's attitudes to the world. Identity is a complex phenomenon that includes various levels of consciousness as individual and collective, ontogenetic and sociogenetic foundations. Reflection is an essential component of identity development. It is one of the key prerequisites for the transition from the regime of determinism to the regime of self-determination. Reflection ensures the differentiation of the structural components of personal identity, the integrity and definiteness of its boundaries, adaptation and flexibility to the changing conditions of the external environment, endows identity with new systems of meanings, and provides a conscious transformation of identity units.

Attention to the personal development of psychologists is clarified in the idea of realizing a personal contribution to professional activity. Requirements are imposed not only on the knowledge and skills of the psychologist but also on their personality. The effectiveness of a practical psychologist is determined by personality traits, professional and special skills. The personality of the psychologist is the core of psychological support, on which the effect of psychological assistance depends. The psychologist needs to have the following personality traits (Kočiūnas, 2020). Authenticity as an example of flexible behavior and sincerity towards another person generalizes many personality traits. Openness to one's own experience, sincerity in the perception of one's own feelings allow psychologists to control their behavior. The psychologist is able to promote the client's positive change when he shows tolerance for all the variety of others and own's emotional reactions. Such qualities of a psychologist as personal responsibility and tolerance to uncertainty help him to accept the variability and uniqueness of human experience and make professional decisions free from psychological defence mechanisms. Developed self-knowledge, the strength of personality and identity are the basis for a stable professional position of a psychologist. A strong personal identity helps to have an inner attitude as a psychologist rather than simply reflecting the motives of others.

Identity is a complex dynamic structure that forms and develops throughout a person's life. The unit of this structure is self-determination. Identity is an indicator of a mature personality and a condition for the effective functioning of an individual in a certain culture and a system of certain social relations. All these qualities are acquired through personal and professional experience. They can be considered as a weighty criterion for the effectiveness of the professional activity of a psychologist.

Purpose of the study

This study examined the congruence of ego identity in correlation with the types of reflection among students of psychological faculties. The relevance of the study was determined by the important problem of personal and professional development of student psychologists.

Literature review

The problem of identity was posed in diverse theoretical and empirical studies (Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011; Ryeng, Kroger & Martinussen, 2013). In the dynamic approach, ego identity is defined as an indicator of a mature personality and a condition for its effective functioning in a certain culture, in a system of certain social relations (Kernberg, 2006; Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010; Jespersen, Kroger, & Martinussen, 2013). A sense of identity is a sense of personal authenticity and confidence in external approval and acceptance by others. Erikson (1968) shares the concepts of ego identity and group identity. Ego identity reflects the individual way in the generalization of life experience, but also has social significance. Personal identity, being significant for a particular culture, is a variant of group identity. Personal and social identities are considered in unity. Marcia and Josselson (2013) define identity as a dynamic system of needs, abilities, beliefs and individual history. This system is manifested through patterns of problem-solving and the formation of "identity units". The expansion of the identity structure leads to an increase in the degree of self-awareness, purposefulness and meaningfulness of one's life. Marcia (2006) identified four statuses of identity: identity achievement, psychosocial moratorium, foreclosure, identity diffusion. The status of the achieved identity means that a person has gone through a period of youth crisis and self-research, has formed a certain set of personally significant goals, values and beliefs. Moratorium is a state of identity crisis, an attempt to resolve it through various experiments. Foreclosure is the status of a person who has never experienced a state of identity crisis. Such a person has formed certain goals, values and beliefs as a result of identification with parents or other significant people, and not as a result of an independent search and choice. Identity diffusion is the state of people who do not have sustainable goals, values, beliefs and who do not actively try to shape them.

The problem of identity in the Cultural and Historical Concept (Vygotsky, 1984) and the Activity Theory (Leontiev, 1978) was considered in two approaches. The first approach studied the identity of a person in the framework of developmental psychology as the ratio "consciousness - self-awareness - the image of "I". The structure of self-consciousness was considered as a holistic formation that determined the significance and development of each part. Self-consciousness is a system of values and personal meanings that determine the individual being of a person. The term "identity" is broader than the term "self-awareness." It includes non-reflexive content escaping the control of self-awareness. The second approach studied identity as self-determination and self-attitude of an individual in the context of socialization. A personality appropriates its essential features through identification with others and individualizes through isolation from others. The activity approach asserts that external causes act through internal conditions so that the effect of the action depends on the internal properties of the subject. Self-determination acts as the refraction of external social conditions by a consciously acting subject. Self-determination is associated with the development of self-awareness, self-knowledge and with the development of a holistic worldview, including relations to oneself, to other people and the world (Leontiev, 1978). Analysis of the essence and structure of the image of "I" is the core component of self-attitude. The image of "I" includes bodily, social-role, psychological, active, and semantic definitions of oneself (Leontiev, 2011; Kostenko & Leontiev, 2018).

Personal identity was studied in the context of personality integrity. Self-awareness provides the differentiation of the structural components of identity, the integrity and certainty of its boundaries, adaptability and flexibility to changing environmental conditions (Antonova, 1996). The concept of social identity was revealed through the content of the self-concept and the inclusion of the individual in a social group. Leontiev (2012) defines two identity strategies: social and personal. The strategy of social identity involves identifying yourself through belonging to a group. The strategy of personal identity is revealed as a process of gradual emancipation of a person from various forms of symbiotic dependence and the development of independence and autonomy.

Methodology

The analysis of various theoretical concepts of identity made it possible to determine the methodological basis for the present study of the congruence of the ego-identity among the students of the faculty of Psychology. The conceptual framework is the theory of structure and development of personality identity by (Leontiev (2012); the concept of ego-identity by Erikson (1968); concept of identity status by Marcia (2006). We understand personality identity as a formed and personally accepted image of "I" in the whole diversity of human relations to the world. The relevance of the study is determined by the insufficient development in the field of personal and professional development among students of the faculty of Psychology.

The purpose of the research is to examine the congruence of ego identity in correlation with the types of reflection among the students of the faculty of Psychology.

The research methods are Differential Diagnosis of Reflection (Leontiev & Osin, 2014), Method "Personality Identity" (Nikishina & Petrash, 2014), Personality Maturity Questionnaire (Gilbukh, 1994). Differential Diagnosis of Reflection is used to diagnose the type of reflection as a stable personality trait. The respondents were asked to rate 30 statements on a 4-point scale. The types of reflection: system reflection, introspection and quasi-reflection. The method "Personality identity" is a list of linguistic-semantic forms. The subjects rank them sequentially in descending order from the maximum significance (1 point) to the minimum significance (15 points). Indicators of the method: cognitive, emotional-motivational and behavioral structural parameters of the image of "I". Scales of the method: high, average, low and very low degree of congruence in the structure of personal identity. Personality Maturity Questionnaire allows assessing the overall level of personality maturity. The method also includes the following indicators: achievement motivation, the concept "I", sense of civic duty, life attitude, ability to psychological proximity with another person. The questionnaire includes 33 questions with 7 possible answers.

The sample of the study involved 40 participants: students of the Institute of Psychology and Education, Kazan Federal University. The average age of the subjects was 21 years.

Results

Studying the participants' types of reflection it was revealed that most of the subjects have a systemic type of reflection in the normative range (70%). This type of reflection was productive. Systemic reflection was based on self-distance and allows one to see both the subject and the object views. Students-psychologists were able to perceive life situations in various ways: they relied both on the assessment of the situation and on their own feelings and desires. The level of systemic reflection above normal was observed in 5% of the subjects. A person with increased reflection was aware of what was happening, tested reality well, but their spontaneity could decrease. However, 25% of students had a low level of systemic reflection. They relied mainly on their feelings when making decisions and did not assess the external situation.

An introspective type of reflection above standard values was found in 5% of students. Introspection is associated mainly with focusing on one's own condition and one's own feelings. This type of reflection was unproductive. It was characterized by increased attention to students' own feelings and thoughts, but reduced attention to what was happening around them. The result of such reflection could be the incongruence between the real situation and the person's feelings about the situation. The quasi-reflexive type was within the standard values for the majority of students (83%).

A high level of quasi-reflection is aimed at an object that is not related to the actual life situation. But standard values of this type of reflection in a sample of students allowed us to conclude that the participants' fantasies were embodied in creativity, gave a creative character to the activity and did not conflict with reality. The remaining participants (17%) had a very low level of quasi-reflection. It was expressed in poor imagination and lack of creativity in life.

Table 1. Analysis of the Mean Values for Types of Reflection

Types of Reflection	Mean values ($\bar{x} \pm \sigma$)	Standard values ($\bar{x} \pm \sigma$)
Systemic Reflection	38.5 \pm 4.7	39.58 \pm 5.15
Introspective Reflection	23.9 \pm 4.4	25.11 \pm 5.68
Quasi-Reflection	24.4 \pm 4.1	27.39 \pm 5.69

The prevailing type of student psychologists' reflection was systemic (Table 1). Systemic reflection was a stable indicator of students' ability to arbitrarily and productively direct consciousness to themselves. Openness to experience, the ability to self-reflection, self-awareness in the context of activity were the leading personality traits of students-psychologists that supported their personality changes in the course of education.

The results of the study of the congruence in the structure of participants' ego identity. Half of the participants had an average degree of congruence in the structural organization of ego identity (55%). This means an average level of severity of socio-psychological adaptation. Students' attitudes toward themselves are mostly positive. The value system is sustainable. The level of autonomy and independence is average. A low degree of congruence in the structural organization of ego identity was found in 30% of participants. This indicated that a third of student psychologists had a low level of socio-psychological adaptation. They were characterized by unstable values, ambiguous attitude to themselves, lack of independence. Only 15% of students had a high degree of congruence of ego identity. All indicators were at a high level of development: socio-psychological adaptation, a positive attitude towards oneself, a stable system of values, independence and autonomy. Thus, students of the faculty of Psychology had mainly an average degree of congruence in the organization of ego identity (mean values 25.3 \pm 6.59). Emotional-motivational and behavioral components prevail over the cognitive one in the structural organization of participants' ego identity.

The results of the study of the participants' level of personality maturity were as follows. Psychological students have a satisfactory level of personality maturity. The average level of achievement motivation was found in most students (80%), the rest of the sample had a high achievement motivation.

The values on the "Self-concept" scale were in a low range for half of the students (47.5%). They expressed general dissatisfaction with themselves, personal characteristics and the quality of knowledge. Average satisfaction with personality traits was found in 42.5% of respondents. Only 10% of students were completely satisfied with themselves, had adequate self-esteem and accepted themselves.

The main sample for the participants had high values on the "Sense of civic duty" scale (80%). They showed great interest in the events of social and political life, a high level of civic identity, and a high responsibility for fulfilling social roles. A small part of the sample (20%) was not interested in the phenomena of socio-political life.

Table 2. Analysis of the Mean Values for Indicators of Personality Maturity

Indicators of Personality Maturity	Mean values ($x \pm \sigma$)
General Level of Personality Maturity	41 \pm 9.3
Achievement Motivation	16 \pm 5.6
Self - Concept	20 \pm 7
Sense of Civic Duty	8 \pm 3.7
Life Attitude	18 \pm 5.3
Psychological Closeness with Another Person	8.4 \pm 4.2

Exactly half of the subjects had high values on the "Life Attitude" scale, which indicated psychological stability (50%). The other half of the students had medium (42.5%) and low values (7.5%) on this scale, which indicated impulsiveness.

The results of diagnosis on a scale of "Ability to psychological closeness with others" had the following distribution. 42.5% of students had a high score on the closeness scale. This was manifested in their friendliness to people, in empathy, the ability to listen and hear, and the need for communication. A satisfactory

result on this scale was in 20% of participants. This indicated their friendly attitude towards people, but the need for communication was not relevant. 37.5% of respondents had an unsatisfactory result, which was expressed in the absence of a need for spiritual closeness with other people.

On the whole, the level of students' personality maturity could be described as satisfactory (80%). A high level of integral indicator of personality maturity was observed for 20% of participants.

Correlation analysis revealed the following significant correlations between indicators of reflection and personality maturity. Systemic reflection revealed a significant positive correlation (0.35 **) with personality maturity, and quasi-reflection shows a significant negative correlation with the integral indicator of personality maturity (-0.38 **). The reflection ability was one of the important qualities of a personality mature person. Systemic reflection was based on students' self-distancing and an abstract look at oneself. The revealed correlation testified that the ability of students to realize their needs and feelings, to understand the integrity of the world and people, the capacity for psychological -closeness with others increased (0.39 **). The level of congruence of participants' personal identity had a positive relationship with personality maturity (0.32 **).

Discussion

The results of studying the future psychologists' reflection showed that the majority of participants had a systemic type of reflection. In general, students had an adequate worldview and a realistic "I" image. The maximum implementation of systemic reflection is a quite complicated process. It is important to develop a systemic type of psychologists' reflection in order to realistically evaluate difficult situations and solve problems consciously. The data obtained stated positive results when assessing types of students' reflection in the process of training at the Institute of Psychology:

- differentiation of the "external and internal worlds";
- the integrity and certainty of the boundaries of the "I" image;
- adaptability and flexibility to changing environmental conditions;
- congruence between assessment of the situation and feelings about the situation;
- a sufficiently high level of awareness in the system "I - Situation - I am in a situation";
- the ability to make a strong-willed decision to stop the flow of automatic thoughts and become aware of yourself at present;
- effective personal and social prediction;

- realistic and systematic perception of difficult situations.

An analysis of the structural organization of ego identity found approximately the same high degree of severity in emotional-motivational and behavioral components, but a moderate degree of a cognitive component. The emotional and behavioral components in the participants' identity system prevailed over the cognitive one. Students' self-perceptions could be described as follows. The emotional content of social roles was certain in gender, family, professional and interpersonal contexts. The same trend was observed in ideas about the implementation of social roles in behavior. Students' idea about their social roles in the cognitive parameter was a bit vague. It is the imbalance in the cognitive component that reduced the general indicator of congruence in the structural organization of the ego identity of the future psychologists to an average level.

This result allowed a deeper understanding of the development and nature of the personal identity of future psychologists in the course of vocational training. Students are aware of their feelings about social roles (student, citizen, family member, future professional). They understand the ways in which they realize these roles during their studies at the university. However, the cognitive assessments of these roles may be distorted and confused. Students do not have a clear understanding of the content of performed social roles. The boundaries of social roles were fuzzy. Perhaps this is due to age features. The youthful age of students is sensitive to self-determination. In this case, the average degree of congruence in students' personal identity becomes understandable as an age-related phenomenon. Personal and professional self-determination in youth determines life views and a life perspective. This is a very responsible period for consciously achieving identity through decision-making. Therefore, the result of the unstable cognitive component of the participants' identity could be interpreted as a natural and positive process in personal development. It is necessary to create conditions for clarifying the content of students' social roles and making decisions about values, worldview, life guidelines in the process of training future psychologists.

The activities of future psychologists were generally aimed at significant life goals. Nevertheless, their desire for full self-realization did not yet possess a sufficiently strong sense-forming force. The motivation for achieving high results in activities was weakened when full independence in decision-making was required, or challenges and errors arose in the process of activity.

The average degree of self-satisfaction on the scale of students' self-concept was revealed. Respondents were not confident enough in their capabilities and abilities. Many students did not accept some aspects of their personality. There was also a general tendency to not rate their knowledge and skills high enough. This result was consistent with data on the average degree of the cognitive component in the structure of ego identity. The revealed distorted cognitive assessments of students about social roles could explain students' dissatisfaction with themselves, high demands on themselves and low self-esteem.

It was found that half of the student sample had a high level of psychological stability and emotional poise. These students regulated their psychological state and behavior well in various life situations. They were able to comprehend what was happening and make decisions judiciously when faced with difficulties. We can say that ways of adapting to reality were productive for half of the student sample. However, this indicator was at an average level for almost half of students and at a low level for some individuals. Some psychological instability, emotional imbalance and a tendency to impulsive reactions to undesirable events at the time of diagnosis were revealed.

Taking into account that the majority of the participants had a systemic type of reflection, we believed that the result of the average level of psychological stability of students was not related to their low ability to realize what was happening. It was possible that this result could be explained by the state of students with intensive workloads in educational and professional activities. On the other hand, this result can be correlated with data on the average level of the cognitive component of ego identity. Possibly that the feelings associated with the period of professional formation and self-determination had a high intensity. These assumptions require additional verification on a larger sample. At this stage, we could not state unequivocally that there was a tendency of psychological instability among students-psychologists.

The ability to be in close relationships with others is an important professional quality of a psychologist. Creating contact with another person as the basis for a working alliance is of great importance in the provision of psychological assistance. The relationship between the client and the psychologist can become a new client's experience as more authentic, realistic and integral. In the study, almost half of the students showed the potential for building a working alliance with clients. We could assume that they were characterized by internal congruence and substantiality. A tendency was found in comparing the results of these students in the diagnosis of personality maturity and coherence of identity components. It turned out that students with a high degree of congruence of personal identity had high values on the scale of ability to psychological proximity with others. When a person is confident in their own true uniqueness and admits the individuality and autonomy of another person, they are capable of psychological closeness with others. Nevertheless, half of the students had a satisfactory and low level of ability to psychological proximity to others. This was reflected in the general level of students' personality maturity, which was defined as satisfactory. This veil requires attention and the creation of conditions for the personal development of future psychologists in the learning course.

Conclusion

The social situation of student's development in youth is associated with a test of ego identity (Cramer,

2004). This is the optimal period for the development of social and personal maturity (Hill et al., 2013). Experimenting and clarifying social roles is a natural process for young students. Students solve a very important task of personal self-determination and life position in the process of vocational training. It is extremely important for future psychologists to make decisions and take responsibility for their values, worldview, life perspective in order to achieve ego identity. This is the process of constructing the "I" image as the inner center of the personality by defining values and worldview. The research showed that students were in the active process of personal self-determination while vocational training. They differentiated their social roles well, understood the ways of acting these roles, and realized their feelings. However, students experienced some difficulties in cognitive assessment of the content of social roles. At the same time, the level of reflection of students was quite high, and the type of reflection was systemic. Students of the faculty of Psychology were able to arbitrarily and productively direct consciousness to themselves. Reflection is an important basis for the transition from external determination to self-determination. The readiness of future psychologists for personal self-determination and systemic reflection contributes to the achievement of ego identity. The development of a harmonious and self-sufficient personality is a condition for the professional development of future psychologists. Life difficulties are encountered with a firm sense of reality and individuality (one's own and others). Accordingly, awareness and adequate testing of reality, confidence in one's personality, consistency of identity components, the ability to experience psychological closeness with another are important personal achievements of future psychologists.

The results of the study can be implemented into the professional training of psychologists. In the course of the professional training of psychologists, great attention must be paid to the development of students' reflection and the achievement of positive ego identity. It is important to develop a systemic type of psychologists' reflection in order to realistically evaluate difficult situations and solve problems consciously. Openness to experience, the ability to self-reflection, self-awareness in the context of activity are the leading personality traits of students-psychologists that support their personality changes in the course of education. It is necessary to create conditions for clarifying the content of students' social roles and making decisions about values, worldview, life guidelines in the process of training future psychologists.

The results of the study allowed a deeper understanding of the development and nature of the personality identity of future psychologists in the course of vocational training. In general, the data obtained stated positive results when assessing types of students' reflection. However, the imbalance in the cognitive component reduced the general indicator of congruence of the ego-identity of the future psychologists to a moderate level.

The value of reflection in achieving ego identity has been determined among students of the faculty of

Psychology was determined. The readiness of future psychologists for personal self-determination and systemic reflection contributes to the achievement of ego identity.

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