

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

SELF-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY IN THE STUDENT AGE AS AN INDICATOR OF MENTAL WELL-BEING OF PERSONALITY

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ABSTRACT

The aim: The aim of the article is to highlight the results of an experimental study of the indicators of students' mental health depending on their involvement in self-educational activities.

Materials and methods: We conducted a comparative experimental research. There was a block of questionnaires, which required to choose one of the answers offered in the list and evaluate it on a given scale. The research collected data on respondents' self-educational activities and indicators of their mental health: meaningfulness of life, reflexivity, internal motivation for learning, stress resistance, components of self-actualization.

Results: Respondents engaged in self-educational activities in the profession they acquire have significantly higher rates of internal motivation for learning, time orientation and autonomy than respondents who are not engaged in self-educational activities. Respondents engaged in self-educational activities which are not related to the profession they acquire have significantly higher rates of internal motivation for learning, time orientation, cognition and creativity needs than non-self-educated respondents.

Conclusions: The research helps us to understand the progress of students' mental well-being. The results of the research help to find the ways of providing the mental health to students. In particular, encouragement of students' self-educational activities will help to improve the mental well-being of their personality.

KEY WORDS: self-educational activities of students, mental health of the person, research of the indicators of students' mental well-being

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INTRODUCTION

Today we know a lot of research how to improve the quality of specialists' preparation in higher educational establishments [1-3]. The vast majority of such studies relate to finding ways to ensure that students meet the requirements of the professional activity for which they are preparing [4, 5]. However, any training or education will not have the necessary effect without ensuring the mental health of the individual. The mental well-being allows a person to realize their own potential, cope with life stresses, work productively, as well as contribute to the life of their community [6]. Mental health is a resource and a state and is realized in the mental well-being of an individual [7].

And although in the student age the psychological potential of the individual is quite high, they are vulnerable to various social factors [8]. Knowledge of the ways to strengthen the mental health of students and their introduction will enable to prevent many negative phenomena (decreased motivation to learn, emotional burnout, anxiety, depression, apathy, etc.). It can also have a positive impact on youth employment, the filling of competent jobs, the development of society as a whole.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF PERSONALITY AND ITS MENTAL WELL-BEING IN STUDENT AGE

During the student years, the physical maturation of the body ends, the degree of mental and spiritual development

is reached, which allows young people to solve problems related to the choice of field of activity after graduation. The following psychological features are typical for this age: the orientation to self-affirmation, the formation of the individual as a subject of personal development, the development of volitional potential, intelligence (a person masters the most complex ways of intellectual activity, while the development of intelligence is closely linked to creative development), reflection, maximum efficiency, the stability of personality traits is produced [8, 9]. As a subject of educational and professional activity the student is characterized by: a combination of intellectual and social maturity, which allows the formation of high cognitive activity in the professional sphere, the ability to organize their own activities, the emergence of a sense of responsibility for their future, formation of self-awareness and professional self-determination [10,11].

FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF A STUDENT

In a student age, a person experiences the effect of a number of factors that affect his mental health and can weaken the mental well-being. Among them are: the beginning of independent life, high mental load during studying, mastering many new social roles, not always favorable socio-domestic and economic circumstances, fatigue. This age has many

critical social events in the life of the individual: coming of age, criminal liability, the right to vote, the possibility of marriage, choosing a profession, and others [12].

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDENTS' SELF-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR THEIR MENTAL WELL-BEING

Our long-term observations of university students show that the more a person is aware of their goals, opportunities, abilities, strives for self-realization in life, the more actively he is engaged in self-education – trying to learn more about his profession or acquire other competencies. Self-educational activity, as a rule, is purposeful and creative, it is motivated by internal motives of self-improvement, bears the imprint of personality and involves the use of special means of finding and mastering social experience [13]. We assume that by its nature, self-education activates such important characteristics for the psychological health of the individual as internal motives for activity, reflection and understanding of their actions and life in general, stress in situations of uncertainty, the desire for self-actualization in its various aspects. An experimental study was conducted to verify the proposed assumption.

THE AIM

The aim of the article is to highlight the results of an experimental study of indicators of mental health of students depending on their involvement in self-educational activities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

DESIGN

We have developed a comparative experimental research. A block of questionnaires was used to select one of the answers in the list (questionnaire, Reflexivity Questionnaire by A. Karpov, Methodology for Diagnosing the Orientation of Learning Motivation by T. Dubovytska, «Forecast» Methodology by VA Bodrov, SAMOAL Methodology) and to evaluate on a scale (Test SJO by D. Leontiev). The study collected data on (a) respondents' self-education and (b) indicators of their mental well-being: meaningfulness of life, reflexivity, intrinsic motivation to learn, stress resistance, components of self-actualization.

ADMINISTRATION

The survey was conducted in Ukrainian, as it is the most common language for respondents in this region.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The research contains two parts, which is due to the specifics of the comparative experiment.

The first part collects information on the employment of respondents in self-educational activities. For this purpose,

a survey was used, during which the respondents had to choose the answer to the incomplete sentence: «Studying in a higher education institution, I...».

The presented answer options were as follows:

- a) I am interested only in the information that is necessary for passing exams or tests;
- b) I am interested in studying certain disciplines, and it happens that I work up much more information than required for exams or tests;
- c) I am actively interested in information that is not directly related to the disciplines taught at our faculty, and I spend more time processing it than the program task;
- d) I do not feel the desire to learn something new, to acquire new skills and abilities in any field.

The answer «a» was regarded as indicating that the student's educational activities are limited only by the tasks set by teachers; answer «b» – indicated involvement in self-educational activities related to the profession; answer «in» – indicated involvement in self-educational activities not related to the profession; the answer «g» – indicated a passive attitude to learning in general.

In the second part of the research we studied psychological characteristics – the indicators of mental well-being of three groups of respondents: meaningfulness of life (was diagnosed by the SJO Test by D. Leontiev), reflexivity (diagnosed by Reflexivity Questionnaire by A. Karpov), internal motivation of studying (studied by educational motivation of T. Dubovytska), stress resistance (studied according to the Methodology «Forecast» by V.A. Bodrov), self-actualization and its components (studied using the method of SAMOAL).

DATA ANALYSIS

Program SPSS.24.0 was used to compare the indicators of mental well-being of students with different self-educational activities. Descriptive statistics methods were used to determine the mean values of the mental health of the individual. And the U-criterion of Mann-Whitney was used to calculate the reliability of differences between independent groups of people on the criteria of mental well-being of the individual.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was conducted in accordance with the principles of the APA for human researches. The students were provided with a set of forms of these methods, approved by the ethics commission of the Department of Psychology of the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine. The research was anonymous, the participants were informed that their responses would be treated confidentially, anonymously, all data would be analyzed in a generalized form without any conclusions about respondents. Participation in the study was voluntary. Students of 1-5 courses of various specialties of higher education institutions of Ukraine (National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine, V. Hnatiuk Ternopil

Table I. The average values of mental well-being of the individual in different groups of respondents, M

No	Indicators mental well-being of the individual	Average values in the groups of respondents					
		Group 1 Students who carry out self-educational activities in the specialty they acquire		Group 2 Students engaged in self- educational activities not related to the profession they are acquiring		Group 3 Students whose educational activity is limited to the performance of tasks in disciplines	
		M	Σ	M	σ	M	σ
1	Meaningfulness of life	94,67	13,71	98,73	18,31	93,7	16,74
2	Reflexivity	121,33	11,6	117,23	13,05	117,77	9,68
3	Internal motivation for learning	13,8	3,39	18,5	10,2	10,7	3,08
4	Neuropsychological stability	23,7	6,84	22,83	8,2	24,87	8,53
5	Orientation in time	5,9	1,11	6,1	1,39	5	1,27
6	Values of self-actualized personality	9,03	1,76	9,3	2,1	8,7	1,94
7	Belief in human capabilities	3,9	1,26	4,33	1,56	3,63	1,12
8	The need for knowledge	5,97	1,18	6,3	0,97	5,43	1,37
9	Creativity	9,4	2,04	9,83	2,21	8,03	2,64
10	Autonomy	8,47	1,64	7,83	2,33	6,93	1,87
11	Spontaneity	6,4	1,85	6,93	2,33	6,9	1,79
12	Self-understanding	4,13	1,36	4,87	1,48	4,5	1,2
13	Autosympathy	6,63	2,1	7,1	2,69	7,57	2,26
14	Contact	4,83	1,52	5,5	1,47	4,97	1,37
15	Flexibility in communication	5,6	1,4	5,57	1,16	5,2	1,43

National Pedagogical University, National Pedagogical Drahomanov University and Yu. Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University) were involved, a total of 324 persons. The research was conducted in the 2018-2019 academic year.

RESULTS

INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN SELF-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

In the first part of the study, according to the results of the survey, all students were divided into four groups:

- 1) students engaged in self-educational activities related to the specialty they acquire;
- 2) students who are engaged in self-educational activities that are not related to the specialty they acquire;
- 3) students who are not engaged in self-educational activities (their self-educational activities do not go beyond the performance of tasks in academic disciplines);
- 4) students who are not engaged in self-educational activities (and passive attitude to the implementation of educational tasks).

Since the fourth group was represented by only two students out of all respondents, we further analyzed the empirical data of the students only of the first three groups.

To increase the reliability of the results of the research, the groups were balanced by the following indicators: university, specialty, course and gender in a random way.

Therefore, each of the selected groups included 30 people who were full-time students of 1-4 courses of specialties «Construction and Civil Engineering» (NULES of Ukraine), «Economic Cybernetics» (NULES of Ukraine), «Forestry» (NULES of Ukraine), «Social work» (NULES of Ukraine), «Psychology» (NULES of Ukraine, Volodymyr Hnatiuk State Pedagogical University, MP Drahomanov National Pedagogical University), «Publishing» (Yu. Fedkovych National University). The total number of respondents is 90 people.

INDICATORS OF MENTAL WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS WITH VARIOUS SELF-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

In the second part of the study, in consequence of the application of methods for determining the indicators of mental well-being of the individual the following results were obtained (see Table I).

The results of the study showed (see Table 1) differences in the average values of mental well-being of the individual in different groups of respondents. In particular, in the first group of respondents the indicators of reflexivity, autonomy, flexibility in communication were higher in comparison with other groups. In the second group dominated the meaning of life, internal motivation for learning, time orientation, the value of self-actualized personality, belief in human capabilities, the need for knowledge, creativity, spontaneity, self-understanding, contact, and the best in-

Table II. The results of comparing the values of mental health of the individual in different groups studied by the Mann-Whitney U-criterion

No	Indicators mental well-being of the individual	Comparable groups of recipients			
		Group 1 i 3		Group 2 i 3	
		U_{emp}	p	U_{emp}	p
1	Meaningfulness of life	445	$\geq 0,05$	402	$\geq 0,05$
2	Reflexivity	349	$\geq 0,05$	413,5	$\geq 0,05$
3	Internal motivation for learning	253,5	$\leq 0,05$	286	$\leq 0,01$
4	Neuropsychological stability	431,5	$\geq 0,05$	381,5	$\geq 0,05$
5	Orientation in time	318,5	$\leq 0,05$	299,5	$\leq 0,05$
6	Values of self-actualized personality	398	$\geq 0,05$	371,5	$\geq 0,05$
7	Belief in human capabilities	402,5	$\geq 0,05$	345	$\geq 0,05$
8	The need for knowledge	368,5	$\geq 0,05$	319	$\leq 0,05$
9	Creativity	338,5	$\geq 0,05$	303	$\leq 0,05$
10	Autonomy	280,5	$\leq 0,01$	356	$\geq 0,05$
11	Spontaneity	351	$\geq 0,05$	405,5	$\geq 0,05$
12	Self-understanding	394	$\geq 0,05$	391	$\geq 0,05$
13	Autosympathy	357,5	$\geq 0,05$	422,5	$\geq 0,05$
14	Contact	416,5	$\geq 0,05$	390	$\geq 0,05$
15	Flexibility in communication	390,5	$\geq 0,05$	389	$\geq 0,05$

indicator of neuropsychological stability (according to the method "Forecast" the lower is the rate, the higher is the level of neuropsychological stability). In the third group of respondents the average rates of self-understanding and autosympathy were higher than in other groups. In this case, each of the groups is relatively homogeneous on the values of each of the indicators, except for the indicator of internal motivation of learning in the second group.

In general, the average values obtained in Table I show that there are differences in the mental health of those students who are engaged in self-educational activities and those who are not engaged (limited to the performing of educational tasks set by teachers). The Mann-Whitney U-criterion was used to verify the significance of such differences (see Table II).

Table II highlights the significant differences between the indicators of internal motivation for learning of the studied groups 1 and 3, and groups 2 and 3. Moreover, the statistical error in the differences of this indicator is less between 2 and 3 groups. In addition, groups 1 and 2 differ significantly from group 3 in terms of orientation over time. The subjects of the first group significantly differ from the subjects of the third group also in terms of personality autonomy. The subjects of the second group significantly differ from the subjects of the third group also in terms of the need for cognition and creativity.

According to other indicators, no significant differences between the groups were found.

DISCUSSION

This article presents a research of indicators of mental well-being and self-education of students of universities of Ukraine.

THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES ON INDICATORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WEALTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

The study showed that students who are engaged in self-educational activities are significantly more likely to have higher rates of internal motivation for learning, orientation in time, than those students who are not engaged in self-education and only perform the tasks of teachers. Internal motivation of learning is characterized by the manifestation of the student's own activity during educational activities; he is directly involved in the process of cognition and this brings him emotional satisfaction [14]. Orientation in time allows students to understand the existential value of life "here and now", to enjoy the current moment, without comparing it with the past and without devaluing the expectation of future success [15].

ORIENTATION OF STUDENTS' SELF-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY AND INDICATORS OF THEIR MENTAL WELL-BEING

Students carry out various types of self-educational activities: in the specialty they acquire, and not related to their future profession, which they master at the university [16].

The type of self-educational activity also activates the indicators of mental well-being of the individual.

Students who are engaged in self-educational activities in the specialty they acquire have significantly higher rates of autonomy than those who are not engaged in self-educational activities. Autonomy of the individual, according to most humanistic psychologists, is the main criterion of psychological health, its integrity and completeness; in essence, it is close to the concepts of «inner – directed», «aliveness», «self-support», «ripeness» [15; 17].

Students who are engaged in non-educational non-university activities are significantly more likely to have higher levels of cognition and creativity than respondents who are not self-employed. The need for knowledge is characteristic of people who are open to new impressions; it provides instant cognition; people with a high level of such need tend to effectively learn something new and appreciate it [15]. Creativity and the need for it mean a person's creative attitude to life [15].

The conducted empirical research allowed to achieve the set goal – revealed more pronounced indicators of mental well-being of students engaged in self-educational activities.

The results of the work are presented for discussion for the first time.

LIMITATIONS

We have singled out an incomplete range of mental health indicators for diagnosis; no study of the impact of the duration of self-educational activities on the mental well-being of the individual.

Potential perspectives of the research are the observation of the dynamics of indicators of mental well-being of a person engaged in self-educational activities, compared with the dynamics of such indicators in a person who is not engaged in self-education.

CONCLUSIONS

The study led to the conclusion that the self-educational activities of students are evidence of several indicators of psychological health, such as: internal motivation to learn, good orientation in time (i.e. the ability to live in the present without postponing their lives “for later”). In addition, self-educational activities in the context of the specialty that students acquire, indicates a good autonomy of the individual (i.e. its integrity, completeness, vitality, maturity). And self-educational activities that are not related to the specialty that students acquire also show their higher need for knowledge and creativity (as a creative attitude to life).

The above suggests that the stimulation of self-educational activities of students will help to improve the mental health of their personality.

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The Authors declare no conflict of interest

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