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Role of certain factors in achieving psychological well-being

This paper is dedicated to analysis of the role of certain factors which basically facilitate achieving of the psychological well-being by human being and personality. Paper is based on the modern studies of psychological well-being, as well as its factors and there has been performed more detailed analysis of the role played by human being's emotional competence as one of the factors providing the potential to achieve the psychological well-being of personality. Also, the fact that currently there is little data available on empirical studies of the effects of emotional intelligence and emotional competence on the effectiveness of achieving of psychological well-being is substantiated. Emotional competence is arguably one of essential factors in achieving the psychological well-being, that being the long-range perspective of psychological studies in this field.

Key words: emotional competence, psychological well-being, emotional health.

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Тұлғаның аман-саулығын қамтамасыз етуші кейбір факторлар жайлы

Тұлғаның психологиялық амандығын жүзеге асыруға ықпал ететін әртүрлі факторлардың рөлі қарастырылған. Қазіргі заманғы зерттеулердің негізінде тұлғаның психологиялық аман-саулығын қамтамасыз ететін факторлардың бірі ретінде адамның эмоциялық күзіреттілігінің рөлі егжей-тегжейлі талдау жасалынды. Соңдай-ақ, тұлғаның психологиялық амандығын жүзеге асырудың тиімділігіне әсер етуші факторлардың рөліндегі эмоциялық біліктілік пен эмоциялық интеллект бойынша эмпирикалық зерттеулердің жетіспеушілігі сипатталынған. Мақалада сипатталынғандай, эмоциялық біліктілік, психологиялық аман-саулыққа қол жеткізудегі негізгі факторлардың бірі болып табылатындықтан, психологияның осы аймағында зерттеулерді жүргізу жоспары бейнеленген.

Түйін сөздер: эмоциялық біліктілік, психологиялық аман-саулық, эмоция.

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О некоторых факторах, обеспечивающих психологическое благополучие личности

Данная статья посвящена рассмотрению роли определенных факторов, способствующих достижению психологического благополучия человека как индивида и личности. В статье на основании современных исследований осуществлен более подробный анализ роли эмоциональной компетентности человека как одного из факторов, предоставляющего базовый потенциал для достижения психологического благополучия личности. Также описана недостаточная эмпирическая база данных по исследованиям эмоционального интеллекта и эмоциональной компетентности в роли фактора, влияющего на эффективность достижения психологического благополучия человека. Эмоциональная компетентность, как утверждается в статье, является одним из ключевых факторов в достижении психологического благополучия; тем самым очерчена перспектива проведения дальнейших исследований в данной области психологии.

Ключевые слова: эмоциональная компетентность, психологическое благополучие, эмоциональное здоровье.

**ROLE OF CERTAIN
FACTORS IN ACHIEVING
PSYCHOLOGICAL
WELL-BEING**

Nowadays the term of psychological well-being is widely determined in psychological practice. There are various existing approaches as to determine the term itself, factors of influence, structure of that 'well-being', its determiners and pre-requisites.

For instance, one group of authors characterized psychological well-being of the person as being achievable by means of working out the positive assessment of themselves and their own lives. L.V. Kulikov indicated that this is the prevailing mental state of human being. O.S. Shiryayev understands the psychological well-being as the integral sum of necessary personal resources that ensure the subjective and objective successfulness of the person in the «subject – environment» system.

In his research on this topic N. Bradburn believes that the psychological well-being may only be characterized if one focuses on features that reflect the state of happiness or unhappiness, the subjective feeling of general life satisfaction. The author has created a model of psychological well-being, which in his view, contemplates the balance achievable by means of constant interaction of two kinds of affect – positive and negative [1].

E. Diener considered very similar concept – «subjective well-being». Diener has shown that such well-being consists of three main components: the satisfaction, pleasant emotions and unpleasant emotions, all these three components working together to create a single index of subjective well-being. E. Diener believes that subjective well-being is a component of psychological well-being [2].

In studies of Soviet psychologists model of psychological well-being was proposed by A.V. Voronina. According to her studies, psychological well-being is to be considered as certain systemic feature of human personality which may (or may not) be developed during the process of his life activity and that feature is based on the overall integrity of psychic and physiological functions.

Overall, it can be stated that subjective well-being of personality plays an important role in the process of socialization. Thus, well-being is deeply linked to successful adaptation, personalization and integration of the individual in society, psycho-physiological state, direction of activity, the choice of principal behavior strategies, and many other significant factors.

Throughout human history the psychological phenomenon of emotion was under distinct attention of philosophers, scientists and – later on – psychologists. Emotions were believed to hold one of crucial roles in determining deeds and inner world of people. That judgement was reflected with creation of various theories of emotions (theory of James – Lange, S. Schechter, P.K. Anokhin, L. Festinger et al.).

It must be taken into consideration that during entire history of humanity the majority of the philosophers in their researches in one form or another encountered the problem of happiness – which is closely related to the phenomenon of psychological or, at least, emotional well-being.

The concept of «emotional competence» has first appeared in the 90s. It entered into psychology through the work of foreign researchers [3-9].

Due to the exceptional role that emotions play in human life, R. Buck – first time ever – formulates the concept of «emotional competence», which he defines as the ability to operate with the internal environment of their feelings and desires. «Competence is a new formation of the subject of activity, formed in the course of this activity and representing a systemic manifestation of knowledge, skills, abilities, personal qualities allowing us to successfully meet the challenges that make up the essence of this activity.»

Therefore, the emotional competence of a personality is the formation of certain type being an integral component of personality and it is formed in the very process of emotional functioning, which is a set of features and characteristics of the human personality, as well as emotional knowledge; emotional skills activities; ability, manifested in such activities, including emotional intelligence.

At present time the emotional competence is primarily being studied as a prerequisite for success and leadership in the professional environment, as well as the factor of personal development.

The problem of emotional competence, emotional abilities, emotional content of personality has been very actively studied and researched by researchers all over the world. In Soviet and later Russian psychology there have been accumulated evidence data allowing to consider the development of the emotional sphere as in the framework of the context of the process of identity formation, as well as psychological well-being [10].

Theoretical basis of the concept of psychological well-being have been presented in the fundamental research by Bradburn and E. Diener, but the most widely used in empirical studies of emotional is the

concept by K. Riff [11]. That now-popular concept is actually little more than integrative derivative of different psychological theories. Psychological well-being as a psychological resource allows one to withstand stress and to prevent its negative manifestations, before they can cause significant harm. This reduction of negative stress reactions due to the «psychological resources,» observed both on a psychological and on a biological level. In Soviet-Russian science there have also been performed studies discussing primary role of psychological characteristics in the process of adaptation. In particular, Medvedev [16] states that the psychological characteristics help to create a more adequate structural adaptive response.

At the time Ushinskii, emphasizing the social significance of emotions, noted that society concerned only with the education of the mind – that is, tendency to develop cognitive functions without emotional component – makes a big mistake, because the person is to be considered more of a human when he feels emotion rather than calculating the way he thinks.

According to E.L. Yakovleva, understanding of one's own individuality is deeply locked with the understanding of their own emotional reactions and states that indicate an individual attitude towards situations of life. It is known that prohibition to feel the emotions leads to their exclusion from consciousness layer of psychic. In turn, the impossibility to psychologically process emotion facilitates increasing of their physiological components.

Psychological well-being, in turn, has a number of definitions given by different authors, but for the purposes of this article, we use the fact that it is an integral component of a global definition of the term «health» according to the World Health Organization: «a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity» [12].

On the general principle, one can say that the state of psychological well-being and, if taking more thorough consideration, the phenomenon of emotional health implies a person's ability to successfully implement the participation in social life, to fulfill socially positive role in society, to carry out the execution of their labor obligations and act as a full-fledged member of interpersonal relationships. When comparing the definitions of health according to the WHO and the definition of emotional health [12], it becomes evident that there presents one strong interrelation of health as psychological phenomenon and emotional status of the individual.

Thus, by itself, the concept of psychological well-being is a global one, including emotional health and emotional competence as integrative components. One more important component here is the satisfaction of basic needs of the individual. It should be understood well that the emotional health and, consequently, the psychological well-being of the individual is a phenomenon that is determined by entire system of factors, one of them being the emotional competence.

One of the key issues of the relationship of emotions and health of the person is a pattern we use to respond to our own emotions, and here an important contribution is often made by the dominant type of psychological defense mechanisms. Accordingly, in the case where a person statistically relies on the use of habitual patterns of psychological protection in place of adequate and efficient response (even whether the psychological defense mechanism one prefers is a sublimation, that being said, a defense mechanism not being directly socially negative in its usage), talking about the emotional health of the individual can only be a stretch – if at all possible. One of the criteria of emotional intelligence, in our view, is exactly the ability to freely respond to our own emotional sphere.

The concept of emotional health includes, in particular, the ability to experience emotions and react to them along with the ability to discern and distinguish emotions of other people around them in the process of interpersonal communication, thereby forming and maintaining a positive and healthy emotional background in our environment and – most importantly – on the inside level of our own personalities.

That process is determined by the level of our emotional competence. It should be noted that this phenomenon is closer to the terminology and the phenomenology of psychological well-being and emotional health than to the popular concept of emotional intelligence. This is due to the fact that the concept of emotional intelligence, like most famous models in the framework of this concept, have been created focusing more on the construction of an efficient communication process and further improve its efficiency in pursuit of any predominantly external purposes – this obvious trend is clearly visible in the works popularizing the concept of emotional intelligence by D. Goleman. This is due to the fact that when the concept of this kind possesses such terminology it becomes very popular and gets more opportunities in the future use in applied practices.

As we now know, for decades the term ‘intelligence’ was limited to an aggregate of

exclusively cognitive processes, and in minds of many professionals and, especially, non-professionals still the term is associated only with the characteristics of the human cognitive sphere and processes of cognition. However, intelligence is remarkably complex psychological concept which, above all, emphasizes the integrating function of the psychic.

At the beginning of the 20th century, namely in 1920, Thorndike formulated the three-component model of intelligence, including the ability to understand and operate ideas (abstract intelligence), specific objects (mechanical intelligence) and people (social intelligence). [13]

That was how psychology at the very first time obtained the concept of social intelligence, which was determined Thorndike as «the ability to understand people and manage to act wisely in human relations.» Other leading experts in the field of psychology of intelligence, such as Charles Spearman, D. Wexler, P. Vernon, G. Guilford in one form or another argued that an understanding of the behavior of others and oneself should be discriminated as a distinct intellectual ability.

Nowadays there are plenty of modern approaches in this field – for instance, the theory of multiple intelligences by H. Gardner, which discriminates the intrapersonal and the interpersonal intelligence types [14].

However, the constructs related to the abilities in the field of comprehending social interactions and intrapersonal processes proved to be far too difficult in terms of their operationalization, and, on the basis of a significant intersection of social intelligence with human personality’s verbal abilities.

L. Cronbach concluded that scientific research in this area would be hopelessly prospectless. However, recently in the scientific and popular literature there began to appear more and more works devoted to one of the faculties of this kind – emotional intelligence (EI). In a broad sense, the emotional intelligence is the ability for recognition, understanding and managing emotions; it refers to both the subject’s own emotions and feelings of others.

Studies of emotional intelligence began to appear en masse in scientific publications in the early 1990s. This concept gained popularity and attracted many researchers. The reasons for the popularity associated with attempts to assess how a more holistic adaptive capacity of the individual through its ability to interact with other emotionally as a way to predict the success of behavior in different kinds of social activity.

The concept of «emotional intelligence» was introduced in 1990 by John Mayer and Peter Salovey who described emotional intelligence as a kind of social intelligence that affects the ability to track their own and other people's emotions and feelings. They initiated research aimed to explore opportunities for the development of essential components of emotional intelligence and the study of their significance in the structure of personality's psychic. Their finding: people who are easily able to recognize the emotions of others are better adapted to changes in the environment and establish their supportive system of social relations more quickly. In addition to the studies of these authors, indirect confirmation of these facts are found in studies of other scientists.

One of the mixed models is the representation of phenomenon of emotional intelligence by D. Goleman. He popularized the construct itself and the impact on the worldwide spread of the concept and has made a significant contribution to the use of emotional intelligence in business for training managers, receiving personnel, changes in the organizational culture of the company, etc.

The specific structure of emotional intelligence, according to D. Goleman, includes a set of different qualities and even divergent features: understanding their own emotions, goals and outcomes of their behavior, and at the same time understanding the emotions and behavior of others, the ability to regulate their emotions and behavior and influence the behavior of others humans. The model of emotional intelligence includes the following components: self-awareness, self-regulation, social sensitivity, relationship management, motivation.

As for the concept of emotional competence, it is considered by many authors in the manner synonymous with the concept of emotional intelligence. For our purposes emotional competence should be seen primarily as the ability to achieve and maintain your own emotional health and emotional health of other people in the environment, and only then – as a tool to control the emotional reactions of others (whether it be in the team, or in family life conditions of informal communication). In other words, emotional competence is directly related to and is responsible for the constructive human emotional activity [15].

Emotional competence has been the subject of study for many researchers, although we see a major issue in this field of psychological research in further analysis of the role of emotional intelligence in the form of the principal (at least, one of the principal ones) factor in achieving such a fragile state of the

individual personality as the psychological well-being. Hence, emotional competence develops in ontogenesis, as the result of learning and internalization of social experience. The purposeful development of emotional competence, according to A.V. Libina, is primarily due to the increasing variability of behavior. Increased variability of behavior is possible only through the rejection of stereotypical behaviors. Mental mechanisms of functioning for the emotional intelligence include the creation of new positive relationships that allow to develop an individual style that has balanced optimal parameters, comfort, adaptability and effectiveness [16].

As it was stated in his scientific works by B.I. Dodonov, emotions have independent value exclusively by themselves. B.I. Dodonov states that a person has a need for «emotional saturation». To substantiate this need Dodonov also refers to the well-known consequences of the separation of the child from the mother and the phenomenon of sensory deprivation. Here, author speaks of emotional deprivation, considering that it is a consequence of sensory deprivation. On this occasion the author writes: «... if proved the importance of a purely sensory saturation for normal brain development and function, is it not natural to assume that the saturation with emotions ... is even more necessary? And if this is the case and it actually is this way, it means that the emotional saturation of the human being is his important inherent and developing throughout life need» [17; 18].

As becomes evident, the emotional saturation of the personality is one of its most basic and vital needs. Such need is acquired inherently but it develops during the course of one's whole lifetime. This need can be met by experiencing sufficient amount of not only positive but also negative emotions. Negative emotion is basically an alarming signal generated by our bodies and psychic – that signal tells us that further progression of detected trend in our life inevitably leads to harm being inflicted. And the positive emotions may be considered as signals of feedback due to achieved state of well-being (well, at least for the moment of time). It is clear that the latter type of signal never lasts long, thus – inevitably – the emotional adaptation to the good things and experiences is developed fast. On the contrary, the alarm signal has to be active all the time, until the danger of harm infliction is eliminated. [30]

Basically, emotional competence is one of essential factors in achieving the psychological well-being – and, perhaps, the most important one – due

to the very nature of human emotions. Then there is the fact that currently there is no data available on empirical studies of the effects of emotional intelligence on the effectiveness of interpersonal

communication in the course of work of the psychologist-client practice. That gap encourages conduction of further development of scientific psychological studies in this field.

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