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## Adults' level of optimism and particularities of their behavior in conflict situation

*The article is dedicated to the particularities of the personality behavior in the conflict in connection with the subjective perception of the «conflict» situation. This work outlines the differences in the choice and reaction orientation in the conflict, and also the interrelation of the perception indices of the conflict degree in the assessed situations among people with different level of the optimism.*

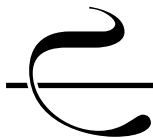
**Keywords:** *conflict, conflict situation, orientation and type of the reaction in the conflict, the level of the optimism.*

The society shift towards the democracy in the different spheres of its existence leads towards the increase of the conflict interaction and tension in the spheres of the social interrelations. Hereafter, it is clear why the strong interest towards the conflict behavior provokes many-sided research of the particularities of the conflict interaction in the different spheres of the scientific knowledge. Socio-psychological subject-matter occupies the leading place among the studies of the interpersonal conflicts.

As it is known, in the social psychology, before the conflict there is always the subjective reflection of the characteristics of the social interactions. These are the perception of the situation as the conflict, and the level of the degree of the proneness to conflict which determine the choice of the corresponding strategies of the conflict interaction and its subsequent development [3, 5, 8, 10].

In the view of A.V . Grishina, every person who takes part in the conflict has its own visualization of this situation, made in the zone of the disagreements. These visualization don't coincide. The sides of the conflict see the situation in different ways – this creates the ground for the clash of the interests. The conflict appears just, when, at least, one of the sides perceives the situation as the display of the unfriendliness, aggression or incorrect, illegitimate way of thinking of the other side of the interaction [5]. The subjective perception of the conflict situation obtains the particular significance in case when the adverse parties disguise their real goals.

According to some authors, the perception of the conflict situation can be of the three types: concept about himself/ herself; perception of the other conflict participants; the environment concepts, where the conflict develops [1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10]. These images, are «...ideal pictures of the conflict situation, but not the subjective reality itself, they are the ingenuous bases of adverse parties' behavior» [10, c. 79]. The con-



cepts of the conflict situation, among the participants determine the range of the possible actions undertaken by the sides involved.

The subjective perception of the situation as the conflict one is connected with age and sex characteristics. Besides, the level of the perception of the situation as the conflict one, can be influenced by the different psychological factors. Thus, O.V. Nacionechnaya, G.A. Shevchuk, A.S. Shevchuk [9] distinguish three types of the psychological determinants of the conflict:

- determinants, connected towards psycho physiological particularities of the development (endured brain injuries and infections, hereditary diseases, lagging behind, particularities of the nervous system, particularly, the processes of excitement and inhibition);
- actual psychological determinants – personality particularities (age and sex particularities, situation of the family development, level of the self-esteem, accentuation of the personality traits);
- social determinants – factors micro and macro environment. As we see they distinguish a group of the factors, connected to the social and psychological particularities.

In our work we are going to consider the level of the optimism as one of socio-psychological determinants of the situation perception as the conflict one and the degree of conflict development.

A lot of philosophers were concerned about the problem of the optimism and pessimism. The optimism is determined by many authors as the world view, value side of the world view, persuasion, ability, faith, system of the views and relations. The optimism let us predict psychological and physical health, connected to the indices of the happiness, with guarding well being under the stress. The majority of the empirical studies, described in the literature, belongs to foreign scientists, such as: M. Seligman [7], M. Shier and S. Karver [13].

In the national science the great attention was paid to the optimism by the famous biologist I. I. Mechnikov in his works «Essays about man's nature» and «Essays about optimism». For the contemporary national psychology this field of the research is relatively new and isn't enough studied. The few researches only partially touch the optimism issue. So, the data about the different aspects of the optimism can be found in the works of N.E. Vodopianova [11], A.A. Gorbatkova [4], N.V. Samoukina [12]. The data received speak about the fact that the optimists better adapt to the important life changes, they endure fewer stresses, and such a way of the overcoming difficult circumstances as avoidance is not typical for them, they are hardly ever hospitalized twice. The optimists are joyful, they remember just the best experience from the past, and they treat other people better. They are more energetic, they have with more initiative, they rarely have depressions, they are less exposed to the psychological burning out; they are characterized by the high adaptability to the new situations, high sociability.

A.A. Gorbatkov [4] thinks, that the role of the pessimism increases in the difficult situations, connected to the threat of the lost of the important compounds of the peo-



ple's life. The optimism plays the important role, when such a threat passes and there is a possibility of thinking of success and comfort. According to N. E. Vodopianova [11], in difficult life situations the optimists use more often constructive transforming models of the behavior. Pessimists hardly adapt to new socio-economic conditions, they are more aggressive and inclined to accuse of his misfortunes the destiny and other people, for example, their subordinates. In the stressful situations the pessimists often use the destructive models of the coping behavior and management, characterized by lower stress resistance in comparison with the optimists.

Thus, from the above said, we can make a conclusion that in many cases the level of the optimism can be a factor, which has a great impact upon the perception of the conflict situation, and also determines the choice of the behavior model in the conflict situation. We suggest, based on the assumption, that this type and reaction orientation in the conflict situation among the people with different level of the optimism can be distinguished. Besides, we think, that the perception of the "conflict" in the frustrating situation can be connected with the level of the optimism.

The issues of the influence of the personality traits, socio-psychological characteristics of behavior in the conflict in the different periods of the time, as it was underlined, were examined by a number of the researchers. However the interrelation of the optimism and particularities of the reaction in the conflict situation is not enough studied and is a subject of the crucial interest.

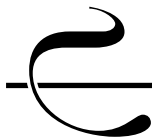
The empirical research was carried out in collaboration with the sixth year student of the correspondence department of SFU Semikina E.S. in the frame of her graduation work. 80 respondents took part in the study from the age of 25 up to 40. In order to achieve the designed goal, the following methods were used: life orientation test by M. Scheier and S. Carver (1985), and Rosenzweig picture frustration test with the modified stimulus material. The respondents were suggested to assess each picture according to its proneness to conflict using 10-points scale: 1 point – situation is not difficult; 10 points – obviously conflict situation, subjectively it is very difficult, hardly possible to avoid conflict.

After the analysis of the received data, all the respondents were divided in dependence of the level of the optimism into the three groups: optimists (31 respondents), realists (35 respondents) and pessimists (14 respondents). The discovered types of the orientations and types of the conflict situations are represented in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

**The average indices of the reaction orientation towards the frustrating situations in groups with different level of the optimism**

Level of the optimism	Reaction orientation by Rosenzweig		
	Extrapunitive reactions	Intropunitive reactions	Impunitive reactions
Optimists	7.7	7.2	9.1
Realists	10.3	6.8	6.9
Pessimists	11.9	7.2	4.9



As we see, there is a certain objective regularity in the use of different orientations in the conflict situations among the people with the different level of the optimism. Thus, the indices of the extrapunitive reactions grow from the least meanings among optimists (7.7) up to the biggest meanings among the pessimists (11.9). And, on the contrary, the indices of the impunitive reactions decrease from the highest scores among the optimists (9.1) up to lowest meanings among the pessimists (4.9). The discovered differences are statistically meaningful using Mann Whitney's U-criterion regarding about extrapunitive ( $Z = -3,9$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,000) and impunitive ( $Z = -3,1$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) reaction orientations between groups of the optimists and pessimist, and in regarding about extra punitive ( $Z = -2,3$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,023) and impunitive ( $Z = -4,7$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,000) reaction orientation between groups of the optimists and realists.

The results of the comparison testify that people with the maximum level of the optimism are inclined to treat the conflict situation as unimportant, assuming no someone's guilt or something that can be improved. The rise of the indices of the extra-punitive reaction orientation among the pessimists expresses itself in the form of overestimating the frustration and blaming the extra causes of this frustration.

Table 2

**Average indices of the reaction types in the frustrating situations in the groups with different level of the optimism**

Level of the optimism	Reaction type according to Rosenzweig picture frustration		
	Obstacle - dominance	Ego-defence	Need persistence
Optimists	9.2	7.4	7.3
Realists	8.9	10.2	4.9
Pessimists	7.9	11.2	4.9

From the tables we can conclude that the differences in the indices of the obstacle-dominant type of the reaction among the optimists, realists and pessimists are not considerable (9,2; 8,9; 7,9). The greatest degree is shown by the ego-defence type of the reaction, moreover, in the groups of the pessimist (11,2) and realists (10,2). The optimists have the highly expressed need persistence style (7,3), comparing with realists (4,9) and pessimists (4,9). The significant differences by the indices of the optimists' reactions, realists and pessimists were found with help of U-criterion of Mann Whitney.

The significant differences were found according to all the types of the reaction: obstacle-dominant type of the reaction ( $Z = -2,0$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,052), ego-defence type ( $Z = -3,9$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,000), need persistent type of the reaction ( $Z = -2,4$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,018). When we compared the groups of the realists and pessimists we couldn't find any meaningful differences. Comparing the results of the group of the optimists and realists we got meaning-



ful differences according to ego-defence type of the reaction ( $Z = -4,4$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,00) and need-persistence type of the reaction ( $Z = -3,5$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,001).

The results prove that with the decrease of the optimism level, the indices of obstacle-dominance and need-persistence type of reaction also decrease, the indices of the ego-defence increase. Thus, according to the carried out research, pessimists actively start to blame someone, they deny their own guilt, they try to avoid a reproach, they show the tendency to defend their «Self». So the received data testify that the orientation and reaction type in the conflict situation depends upon the level of the optimism.

Table 3

**Degree of the proneness to conflict in groups  
with different level of the optimism**

Level of optimism	The number of the respondents in percents %		
	Perception of the situation as having no conflict ground	Perception of the situation having average level of the conflict	Perception of the situation as a conflict
Optimists	68	23	9
Realists	54	29	17
Pessimists	36	35	29

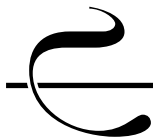
As may be seen, the greatest number of the optimists (68 %) in comparison with realists (54 %) and pessimists (36 %) evaluate the situation as having no ground for the conflict. While assessing the situation, only 9% of optimists considered them as the conflict, whereas realists –only 17 % and pessimists 29 %. As level of the optimism was decreasing, the indices of the «proneness to conflict» in the situation were decreasing.

Table 4

**Mean of the perception of the proneness to conflict in the situation (in points)**

Mean "proneness to conflict" in the situation in points		
Optimists	Realists	Pessimists
2,98	3,95	4,92

The meaningful differences in the subjective assessment of the «proneness to conflict» in situation were obtained by administrating Mann \_Whitney's U-criterion while comparing groups of the optimists and pessimists ( $Z = - 2,5$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,014); comparing groups of the optimists and pessimists ( $Z = - 3,8$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,000); comparing the groups of realists and pessimists ( $Z = - 2,0$ , Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0,042). The results of the comparison testify that the high level of the optimism allows evaluating fewer situations as the "conflict ones".



The pessimists are inclined to assess subjectively a great number of the situations as the "conflict situations".

Thus, we can admit that the perception of the conflict situation and the choice of the orientation and the type of the reaction in the conflict situation are connected to the level of the optimism.

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