



Shkuratova I.P., Tepina M.N.

Emotional self-disclosure of men and women in the process of interaction with different partners

The article is devoted to a problem of emotional self-disclosure insufficiently studied in domestic psychology. Authors examine the cultural instructions existing in regard to expression of emotions by males and females. In the empirical part of the article the authors analyze emotional self-disclosing of men and women in the process of interaction with different partners, and also their attitude to emotional self-disclosing of their own and other's.

***Key words:** emotional self-disclosure; gender behaviour stereotypes; cultural traditions of expression of emotions; positive and negative emotions; social feelings.*

Success of any human interaction depends on their ability to express the emotions correctly and on their skills to read out emotions of partners of interaction. In this respect the recent interest to the concept of emotional intelligence, which is understood as ability of identification, understanding of emotions and managing them has been increasing [2]. And one of the key moments in this concept belongs to the human ability to adequately express their emotional state. In a definite situation of interaction people can be interested in a real expression of their feelings, in their diminishing or concealment, and also in their exaggeration. Moreover, expression of emotions is mostly subordinated to wider purposes of interaction.

Expression of emotions in a certain moment of time provides the information of a different level of generalization: about the momentary attitude to the event taking place; about emotional background of behaviour of the person during the certain interaction with other people; about the individual's steady emotional attitudes (pessimism – optimism). Emotions can be connected to an estimation of the partner, or self, or an object of the joint activity if this communication is business-like. These pieces of information overlap and combine, creating a final result of self-disclosure of emotions.

Expression of emotions is determined by a great number of factors, which as a whole can determine behaviour of the person in a definite situation. At the same time the behaviour of the person is predictable enough. People rather precisely predict emotional reactions of their relatives and acquaintances due to the fact that emotional behaviour of the person is stereotypic enough from both the point of view of its contents and the form of emotional display.



V.V. Boyko has offered a concept «a stereotype of emotional behaviour», which he understands as «an aggregate of steady characteristics of emotions (reactions and conditions) with which the person mostly answers to external and internal influences significant for him according to his nature, health and education» [1, p. 64].

In the given paper we limit ourselves to consideration of a verbal component of expression of emotions, namely, emotional self-disclosure which we understand as disclosing of emotions and feelings by the person through speech. Emotional self-disclosing has been studied as one of the aspects of self-disclosure of the personality, alongside with disclosing of opinions, attitudes and other aspects of individuality, but in domestic psychology it is being investigated as an independent phenomenon for the first time. It is the deepest and intimate form of self-disclosure as it provides access to the personal inner life.

Emotional self-disclosing can be studied through the following characteristics: depth (detail and completeness of the disclosing feelings), breadth (a variety of the disclosing feelings), selectivity (an ability of the person to vary the contents and the volume of emotional self-disclosure in the process of interaction with different people), emotionality (an emotional saturation of the message), sign (a ratio of self-disclosure of positive and negative emotions).

Disclosing of the feelings and emotional experiences is very important for the person as it helps his mental health, renders the means of self-regulation, and allows to establish and maintain close relations with other people. In order to express the feelings, the person should be able to reflex and identify his own emotions, and also learn how to express them, keeping the cultural traditions of the society he belongs to.

The following factors are considered as main determinants of emotional self-expression of a person in the foreign and domestic literature: the cultural prescriptions existing in socio-cultural environment in which the person was brought up; social-demographic characteristics of the subject of self-disclosure (gender, age, social status, nationality, and profession); personal features (values and motivation, features of self-regulation, communicative features of the person and so forth); the character of relations with the recipient.

Speaking about cultural traditions, A. Megrabyan stresses that in the western society there is «a situation at which «socially unacceptable feelings» should be expressed in behaviour, not in speech, and should not be «officially» accepted as a part of the communication of the person: we learn to express great number of feelings in these roundabout ways in order to avoid accusations in infringement of public norms» [6, p. 228].

The open display of feelings, especially negative ones, is not encouraged in most cultures. It is connected with the fact that the society protects itself by such a prohibition from destructive actions of its members connected with too strong or untimely expression of the feelings. However, there are intercultural distinctions in open expression of different emotions.



According to data of D. Matsumoto, who carried out a great number of the cross-cultural researches devoted to expression and recognition of emotions, the Japanese are more inclined to conceal negative emotions, than the Americans who easily show discontent and other negative emotions [5].

A.A. Gorbakov found out that in the Polish society the dominating norm orders to share sorrows rather than pleasures, anxieties rather than hopes. The complaints about misfortune are the usual thing whereas it is accepted to abstain («modesty») from advertising their own progresses («boasting») [3]. The similar attitudes seem to be typical for Russians, too. The author concludes that in the Polish society there is a negative-asymmetric emotional-expressive normative system in contrast to positive-asymmetric one, which is characteristic for the USA.

There is plenty of literature devoted to cultural distinctions in display of emotions. The fact that northern peoples are less expressive than southern in display of their emotions, is generally accepted [2; 5].

Distinctions concern not only nonverbal behaviour, but also the verbal description of the feelings. The American researchers have found out that well-adapted Chinese differ a little from the European Americans in the description of their emotions, whereas Chinese emigrants who have recently arrived in the USA give more somatic terms in their descriptions. It indicates that cultural prescriptions of the residential country dominate as for influence on self-disclosure of emotions [8].

The gender of the self-disclosing subject plays rather substantial role in social expectations concerning emotional expressions. In all cultures there are different standards for expressing emotions by male and female individuals. For instance, in all cultures boys and men are prescribed not to express fear and sadness and girls and women should not display their anger [2; 4]. In the process of upbringing males are demanded to be more restrained in display of any emotions, especially such emotions as fear, anxiety and sadness, that is why a lot of men are not able to express these emotions adequately, which leads them to somatic diseases, and also to wrong interpretation of their behavioural reactions by people around them. Such problem exists for women as well, but in this case it based on a prohibition of anger expression.

According to data of L. Brody and J. Hell, starting with infancy parents develop ability to express their feelings with girls to a greater extent unlike with boys [7]. They more often discuss emotions with daughters, than with sons (except for negative emotions); use a large scale of emotional words speaking to daughters; show them a wider spectrum of emotions; more often smile to them; and respond them more emotionally. As a result these lead to better developed emotional expression in girls and women both in verbal, and in nonverbal fields.

The analysis of the data about a degree of negative emotions experience by male and female representatives, made by E.P. Iljin, has revealed the following [4]. In the course of the first life-years there are no differences in frequency and duration of expression of anger between boys and girls, but some years later these parameters are increasing



with boys and decreasing with girls. E. Maccoby and his colleagues, who have found out this tendency, explain it by the fact that girls are afraid of punishment for display of aggression whereas boys are forgiven for it more readily [4].

The majority of researchers agree to the fact that women display their emotions more plainly than men do; these differences are especially considerable concerning emotions of fear and sadness. Women display their feelings in the process of interaction particularly obviously [2]. Social-psychological characteristics of a personality such as affiliative behavior, ability to empathy, approval requirement make an important contribution to number of personal features influencing expression of emotions and their perception by the interlocutor.

The analysis of foreign sources shows ambiguous character of influence of a gender on inclination to self-disclosure of different emotions; in domestic psychology the given problem has not become a subject of special research yet. It has impelled us to study features of emotional self-disclosure of men and women in the process of interpersonal interaction.

We have formulated the following empirical problems of our research:

- 1) to study the attitude of men and women to emotional self-disclosure of their own and other's;
- 2) to carry out the comparative analysis of emotional self-disclosure of men and women in the process of interaction with different partners;
- 3) to carry out the comparative analysis of self-disclosure of positive and negative emotions of men and women.

We have advanced hypotheses that women have a greater aspiration to emotional self-disclosure of their own and other's, than men; and the largest size of self-disclosure both positive and negative emotions can be observed in the process of interaction with partners from family and friendly surroundings.

We have worked out a questionnaire, which includes 72 questions, divided into 9 scales («family traditions», «emotionality», «potential emotional self-disclosure», «true emotional self-disclosure», «functions of emotional self-disclosure», «attitude to emotional self-disclosure of other's», «choice of a partner», «sincerity», «language difficulties of emotional self-disclosure») for revealing the attitude emotional self-disclosure of their own and other's.

We have used the test «Diagnostics of emotional self-disclosure» (DESD), worked out by I.P. Shkuratova on the basis of the method of J. Kelly's repertory lattices, for diagnostics of self-disclosure of personal positive and negative feelings in the process of interaction with different partners. The list with 7 positive feelings (joy, surprise, hope, love, sympathy, pride, gratitude) and 7 negative feelings (anxiety, jealousy, insult, envy, feeling of fault, shame, anger) has been offered respondents. Every respondent should estimate the completeness of his telling to people from the nearest surroundings (parents, the best friend-man and friend-woman, colleague-man and colleague-woman have been referred to this group) about the feelings. Thus, the examinee should fill in the table, lines in which correspond to the above-listed emo-



tions, and columns – to the interlocutors. The respondent should choose one of the following variants of answers:

2 points – «I tell the given person about this feeling completely and sincerely»;

1 point – «I tell in a general form and not everything»;

0 point – «I never tell the given person about this feeling»;

X point – «I hide this feeling from the given person or tell a lie».

The examinee should also estimate frequency of his having the feeling. It has been stipulated in the instruction that he can have these feelings to the object of self-disclosure, to other people or to events of his life.

Students of the Rostov Construction University (20 men and 30 women) aged from 20 till 25 years old, and also students of correspondence department of psychological faculty (50 men and 45 women) aged from 22 till 30 years old have taken part in the research.

Results and the discussion

The analysis of the data received with the help of the questionnaire has allowed to reveal both similarity, and distinctions in emotional self-disclosure between men and women. The total values of the questionnaire scales have not shown reliable distinctions between genders, however, the comparison of answers of men and women to some individual questions has allowed to find out the essential divergences.

Concerning family traditions of self-disclosure the majority of men has noted the fact that parents did not encourage their talking about feelings and scolded them, when they expressed their negative emotions. As for women, two third of them have admitted that they were scolded for display of negative emotions, but at the same time practically all of them denied that their parents did not like when they had admitted their fears and insults. Practically all women have noted that they easily give way to emotions, remember insults over a long period of time, badly restrain their emotions, are inclined to fast change of mood, feel fault over a long period of time. These show the high level of emotionality of females. Men estimate themselves under these characteristics substantially smaller that corresponds to the gender stereotype of men.

The potential self-disclosure by which we mean the readiness and desire of people to tell others about themselves is also more typical for women. Men admit that they do not always succeed in disclosing their experiences and that it is difficult for them to tell others about their feelings. The scale «true emotional self-disclosure» confirms this tendency. 66 men out of 70 and only 14 women out of the same number of examinees prefer not to speak about their experiences to relatives and friends. Both men (53 persons), and women (60 persons) share their joy with pleasure. Everyone prefer, when there is a feeling of sadness to distract them (to see a film, to read). The majority of men and women understand the significance of emotional self-disclosing for regulation of interpersonal relations, self-regulation, the better comprehension of their own feelings correctly. And at the same time men regret for their frankness more often than women (19 against 5).



Women are much more open for self-disclosure of other's. Almost all women (57 persons) have noted that they have got used to that fact that all relatives share their experiences with them. And only 4 persons among men think so. Almost all men (60 persons) have pointed out that fact that they do not like when friends or relatives tell them about their feelings, and the same opinion have only 9 persons among women. 59 women and 34 men ask their friends and relatives about their feelings themselves. These data show the obvious unwillingness of men to be a target of emotional self-disclosure.

As for a choice of a target of self-disclosure young men and women are unanimous enough. They prefer to tell friends and relatives of the same sex about their feelings much more than parents or persons who are older. Only a few persons are ready to tell a casual fellow traveller about their feelings. Many of the women (62 persons) would prefer to state their feelings on pages of their personal diaries than to tell some close people, and only 10 persons among men accept such a way of self-disclosure.

All subjects admit that fact that they have to be insincere expressing their feelings. Women note that sometimes they express surprise though they do not feel it (65 persons), and exaggerate their joy or gratitude (61 persons). And, accordingly, only 9 and 5 persons among men have admitted such distortions. But all of them permit themselves to express their feelings in the company of friends and in their family more naturally.

As we suppose men have difficulties of feelings expression more often: it is difficult for them to choose words, they try to describe their feelings without going into details. Women use metaphors describing their feelings more often, and both men, and women use youth slang. It is easier for women to describe their feelings in written form.

We have collected data with the help of the test «Diagnostics of emotional self-disclosure» (DESD) for more detailed analysis of features of emotional self-disclosing of men and women in the process of interaction with different partners. The sample consisted of 65 men and 75 women. Individual matrixes of men and women have been summarized by overlapping, and as a result we have received the summary matrix of the data submitted in table 1.

Table 1.
Self-disclosure of emotions of men and women in interaction
with different partners

	Mother		Father		The best friend-man		The best friend-woman		Colleague-man		Colleague-woman		Average value	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Joy	106	129	90	115	111	102	81	119	66	59	51	79	7,7	8,0
Hope	94	127	70	101	86	89	67	86	47	55	39	49	6,2	6,7
Love	72	92	49	68	65	58	48	90	26	24	20	38	4,3	4,9



Sympathy	97	112	68	92	94	85	78	65	57	57	48	71	6,8	6,4
Pride	84	122	72	109	79	92	61	86	55	51	50	61	6,1	6,9
Gratitude	110	138	85	123	104	109	71	108	64	74	57	88	7,5	8,5
Surprise	78	117	68	96	85	94	57	107	53	57	36	72	5,8	7,2
Anxiety	69	104	57	77	73	66	47	85	47	27	29	39	4,9	5,3
Insult	64	97	42	72	67	75	45	86	25	20	21	33	4,1	5,1
Envy	22	48	14	36	24	29	18	30	10	5	6	10	1,1	2,1
Feeling of fault	67	87	54	64	67	57	50	71	34	16	29	26	4,6	4,2
Shame	47	70	37	55	54	42	43	47	18	16	17	21	3,3	3,3
Anger	61	101	60	88	76	73	55	83	38	22	26	41	4,8	5,4
Jealousy	17	21	10	21	41	27	31	64	9	6	8	16	1,7	2,1
Average value	15	18	12	15	15,7	13	11,5	15	8,4	6,5	6,7	8,5		

The average values in the lines and columns have been received by dividing sums by the number of examinees in groups of men and women.

The analysis of self-disclosure of positive and negative emotions of men and women in the process of communication with different partners has shown that the greatest volume of emotional self-disclosure is observed in the process of interaction with the very closest people. The maximum value of self-disclosure of women is directed to the mother, the friend-woman and the father, and the maximum value of self-disclosure of men is directed to the mother, the friend-man and the father. The closest friends of the opposite sex take the next place with a minor difference in values. Predictably, the level of emotional self-disclosure is appreciably lower in the process of interaction with colleagues, than in family and friendly surrounding. It allows us to draw a conclusion that the degree of intimacy and trust of relations between people influences on the volume of emotional self-disclosure of the person with regard to the other definite person.

The analysis of emotions of self-disclosure has shown that the greatest values are observed concerning positive emotions. Joy, gratitude, and sympathy take the first place in the volume of expression. It can be explained with the fact that everybody tries to create an image of a pleasant attentive person, entering into relations with surrounding people. The feeling of love takes the last place among positive emotions in frequency of self-disclosure. This feeling has too intimate character, and respondents dare not always talk about it to people around them. The feeling of love to somebody is more often talked about to mother, and also to close friends.

Respondents prefer to tell mother, the best friend-man (friend-woman) about their hopes. Pride is connected to achievements of people, to events raising their self-esteem that is why the youth more often display it in relation to people from whom it is important to meet with approval, to gain authority (parents, friends).

Respondents display self-disclosure of negative emotions mainly in the process



of interaction with the best friends, mother. It makes the communication with close people more disputed and emotionally saturated. The anger, anxiety, insult take the first place in volume of self-disclosure. It is typical for women to express them in the process of interaction with persons of the same sex (the friend-woman, mother) more often, but men tell about them both to persons of the same, and the opposite sex. Envy and jealousy are the most covered feelings which are discussed only in the process of communication with the closest people. Only a few persons from the interrogated examinees discuss these feelings with colleagues. People avoid admitting these feelings because they are considered socially condemned. Surrounding people are not inclined to share this feeling with the person who admits them. It is necessary to note that self-disclosure of women almost in all emotions is higher than self-disclosure of men.

The carried out analysis has shown that women are more focused on emotional self-disclosure both their own and other's; they control skills of displaying their feelings better. Emotional self-disclosure is non-uniform concerning different feelings and interlocutors. Men and women disclose their positive feelings more completely in comparison with negative ones in accordance with cultural traditions. As it can be seen by the example of envy and jealousy, the more feeling is condemned the more it is covered by the person. The highest level of emotional self-disclosure both men, and women is directed to the members of their family and friends, that sometimes raises a negative emotional background of friendly and family relations. On the whole, the received data correspond to the results received by the foreign researchers of the given problem.

Literature

1. Boyko V.V. The energy of emotions. 2nd edition. – St. Petersburg: Peter, 2004. – 474 p.
2. Breslav G. The psychology of emotions. – M.: Sense, the Publishing center «Academy», 2004. – 544 p.
3. Gorbatkov A.A. Emotionality and sociability: who is more communicative– happy or unhappy people? // Psychology of intercourse: the social-cultural analysis. – Rostov-on-Don. Publishing House of RSU, 2003, pp. 83 – 85.
4. Iljin E.P. The differential psychophysiology of man and woman. – St. Petersburg, Peter, 2002. – 544 p.
5. Matsumoto D. Culture and emotions // Psychology and culture. – St. Petersburg: Peter, 2003, pp. 279 – 308.
6. Megrabyan A. The psychological diagnostics of nonverbal behaviour. – St. Petersburg: Speech. 2001. – 256 p.
7. Ratner C. A Cultural-Psychological Analysis of Emotion // Culture and Psychology, 2000, Vol. 6 (1), pp. 5 – 39.
8. Tsai J.L, Diana I. Simeonova D.I., Watanabe J.T. Somatic and Social: Chinese Americans Talk About Emotion // Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2003, vol. 85.