

Meaning-of-Life Orientations and Values in Youth in the Period of Familial Relationships Formation

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Abstract

Introduction. The article is dedicated to values and life meanings in the young people in course of familial relationships formation. The relevance of the topic results from the interest in the relationship of young people, in their building of their own personal life course. The study aims to study the value-meaning characteristics of young people married or searching partners. 61 subjects have been enrolled in the study, aged 18 to 35 years. The authors compared values and life-meanings in youths being married or seeking for a partner.

Methods. Comparative analysis and generalization of theoretical principles were applied; diagnostic techniques were also used: the 'System of life meanings technique', 'Schwartz's Values Survey', 'Questionnaire of self-relation'; Methods of mathematical processing of empirical data: to analyze the main characteristics of the distribution, we used descriptive statistics and the Mann-Whitney U-test.

Results and Discussion. In the group of young men looking for a partner, preferred life meanings were such as searching for life purpose, existential understanding of the one's being, one's place in the society, self-development and self-realization, active interactions with other people. For the married youth, the value 'self-development' was not relevant, what could influence the family integrity, according to authors. Significant values for the married young people were personal safety, protection against external conditions, a tendency towards achievements within the personal or professional field. For the young people looking for a partner, important values were achievement as the evidence of personal growth, self-sufficiency as acceptance, and responsibility for oneself and one's life.

Statistically significant interrelations between values and life meaning in the youth in a period of the familial relationships formation are presented. The study is novel in that it revealed and characterized the life meanings and values of the modern youth, married or looking for a partner.

Keywords

values, value orientations, life meanings, value field, meaning field, youth, human needs, family relationships, partnership

Highlights

► The composition of the leading values differs among young people who are married (safety, achievements, hedonism) or who are searching a partner (achievements, independence, comfort).

- Life meanings are different in young people who are married (rather communicative) and who are in search of a partner (more existential, hedonistic, self-realization).
 - The life meanings and values of married young people or those searching a partner include safety, achievements, hedonism, independence, comfort, stimulation, self-realization, existential values, communication, family.
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Introduction

The modern age is characterized by constant transformation: social, political, economic. A person experiences the uncertainty in various areas of life, is forced to make quick decisions, to keep increasing his/her competitive ability and adapting to current realities. The concepts of success, a successful person, of ways to achieve the success, ideas about personal life, one's inner circle have radically changed and, accordingly, the values and meanings of every person have been transformed. The crisis of spiritual and moral values of society is becoming apparent. And young people demonstrate the ongoing reappraisal and transformation of values and meanings in Russian society, in search of their place in the world, in their life partner requirements. In psychology, meanings and values are defined as personal constructs and fundamental factors determining the choice of a person's life path.

The concept of values and meanings in psychological science has been studying for a long ago. During this time, many different points of view on this issue have accumulated: psychological, philosophical, biological and socio-economic. At the same time, despite the emerging new research data, we could observe the relevance of the trajectories set by Uznadze (1961), who introduced the term 'installation', by Rubinshtein (2019), using the concept of 'dynamic personality trend,' by A. N. Leont'ev (1971), D. A. Leont'ev (Leont'ev, 2007; Leont'ev, Taranenko, & Kalashnikova, 2017), using the wording 'life meanings'. Modern extensions of the life-meanings areas studied are as follows: the person's choice of inconsistent values, resulting in a non-optimal meaning of life (Karpinskii, 2017); life-meaning orientations of personality, which determine the structure and content of the concept of personality and further influence the meaningful life strategies of personality, characterized by personal and professional formation in personal, family, professional life (Kara & Kruteleva, 2012; Kara & Kas'yanova, 2017; Sukhareva & Filippova, 2018); consideration of meaning-building strategies: they all represent a way of forming personal meanings and afterwards build a picture of the integrity of the personality, which includes various areas (personal, family, professional (Abakumova, Godunov & Pen'kov, 2019), etc. Despite diverging opinions, most authors recognize the paramount role of personal values in organizing the person's life and activity – every person has a need for values that would guide his actions and control his feelings (Fromm, 2018; Frankl, 1990).

Russian researchers and researchers from other countries (Utyuganov, Yanitskii, & Seryi, 2019; Alekseeva, 1984; Ermak, 2016; Baradakova, 2017; Volynets, 2017; Zubova & Kirienko, 2018; Kalugin,

2017; Kolesov, Smolonskaya, & Smolonskii, 2017; Lifshits, 2019; Lobza, Kononchuk, & Egamberdieva, 2017; Butakova & Vyazigina, 2017; Damasio & Koller, 2015; Datu, 2016; Donina, Salikhova, Aryabkina, Chernova, & Kovardakova, 2019; Knyazeva et al., 2019; Litvinova & Kolomoichuk, 2016; Park & Baumeister, 2017; Sun, Fan, Sun, Jiang, & Wang, 2019; and others) pursue investigations of values included in the personality structure. Researchers postulate the association between values and needs, where a need works as an initiator of a value formation, and, on the other side, the need is built due to values. The striving of humans for meaning, the search of the meaning of life is one of basic needs of man. Various sciences – psychology, philosophy, linguistics, culturology – highlight the fact that meanings are determinates that control regulation of an individual's activity is convincingly reflected, and meanings: personal meanings, life meanings, – are the main authority, mastering all other vital manifestations of a personality. It is believed that the meanings are a subjective reflection of the attitude of people to the world, to the objects for which sake they engage to all their activities. Meanings act as basic human needs. The presence of meanings determines the further action of a person, including his/her acceptance or rejection of him/herself, building relationships with other people in different social groups. One of significant aspects for a person presents his immediate environment: the family. The meaning and the value of family in the modern society point out the complexity and ambiguity of the topic. The meaning of family and its human values in the modern society are drastically changed. Many different types of family and family relationships exist nowadays, which betrays shifts in axiological sphere of the modern humans.

Our study postulated that values and life meanings of women and men would change with a change in their marital status.

Methods

Theoretical methods (comparative analysis of ideas and concepts, a generalization of theoretical principles) and empirical one (testing) were used. As diagnostic tools we used 'System of life meanings' technique (Kotlyakov, 2003); 'Schwartz's Value Survey' (Karandashev, 2004; Schwartz et al., 2012), 'Questionnaire of Self-Relation' by V. V. Stolin and S. R. Pantileev (Glukhanyuk & Shchipanova, 2013).

Methods of mathematical processing of empirical data included descriptive statistics (main distribution characteristics), and Mann–Whitney U-test.

Sample

The study involved 61 people aged 18–35 years, who were divided into 2 groups. Group 1 included 13 women and 18 men being married, group 2 included 14 women and 16 men looking for a partner.

Results and Discussion

The study examined the life meanings and values of young women and men married or looking for a partner, against the backdrop of changes in the modern society, social environment, and technologies which inevitably affect psychological characteristics of a person. With the 'System of life meanings' technique (V. Yu. Kotlyakov), using descriptive statistics to analyze the data, we identified the significance of life meanings in married women and men, and in young people seeking for a partner. It is noteworthy that in the group of women and men seeking for a partner, the

dominant positions took 'existential', 'hedonistic', 'self-actualization', 'family', and 'communicative' life meanings: the value of the life as such, the desire to receive pleasure from it, to self-realize, as well as a profound need to care about one's own family, to find the personal destiny, freedom of choice, to experience the value of life.

The fact should be noted that the parameter 'family meanings' is expressed differently in women and men, both in the group of seeking a partner and in the group of married people. For men throughout the sample in both groups, 'family' meanings are equally highly significant. On the contrary, women being in search for a partner do not care much of family meanings; by contrast, for married women the family values acquire a paramount importance, which betray significant changes in a woman's life.

Significance of status meanings in men changes dramatically: that is, for men looking for a partner, 'status' meanings rank the last place in importance, while after the marriage; the significance of the meaning of the 'status' parameter significantly increases, shifting to the third place. For married women and men, the significance of the meaning of 'self-realization' noticeably reduced; however, 'communicative' meanings, on the contrary, get preponderance.

Test of significance in the differences between the two samples – those in search and those married – showed statistically significant differences in the 'self-realization' scale ($U_{emp} = 287$, $p \leq 0.01$): when changing social status the significance of one's achievements shifts on a scale of relevance to lower positions. Next, we examined the values of these groups using the 'Value Survey' technique (S. Schwartz). The Mann–Whitney U-test revealed statistically significant differences between these groups in such scales as 'stimulation' ($U_{emp} = 310.5$ at $p = 0.025$) and 'hedonism' ($U_{emp} = 253.5$ at $p = 0.02$). Quality analysis reveal such a structure of significant values: thus, the values of stimulation work as a need to receive and experience various life situations, to maintain meaningful activity, to experience novelty in various activities; at the same time, acquired social experience possesses great importance, influencing individual characteristics of a person. Another type of values – hedonistic values – basically contain a motivational goal aimed to enjoy life, enjoy a broad range of emotions, sensations, which this is typical for young people in the modern public life reality.

It is noteworthy that in the group of people looking for a partner such values are expressed as 'achievements', 'independence', 'comfort', manifested in the achievement of personal success, significance on the social scale, and the acquisition of professional competencies. Demonstration of social competence (which is the content of this value) in the prevailing cultural standards entails social approval. Since this is a group of young people, they are characterized by a desire and a drive for personal independence demonstration; they prefer to assume responsibility for themselves, to feel like a mature person. This age period accounts for the social formation of a person and, as a result, restraint and control their negative emotional manifestations, supporting development of the self-discipline, the delicate handling with people of different statuses, etc.

In the group of married people such values were preponderant as 'safety', 'achievements', 'hedonism', manifested in stability, harmony in relationships, in the striving to build their own environment with more conservative conditions, to be able to understand and predict the behavior and reactions of others, which implies safety for themselves and for their families, health maintenance, a certain social standing. Personal achievements are considered from the perspective of existing competencies and positive reactions from society, approval and acceptance; cultural and national standards are adopted. Young married people understand and appreciate the pleasure of life in the context of their immediate circle.

Next, we examined the possibility to generalize certain interrelations revealed in our sample of respondents for the entire population of youth. Using Spearman's correlation analysis, we found that there is a reliable association between altruistic meanings and such values as conformity, traditions, kindness, universalism, independence, hedonism, power and security. The intensity of altruistic meanings correlated inversely with such values as comfort, tradition, kindness, universalism, and independence. The lower intensity of altruistic meanings was associated with more markedly expressed above mentioned values. The inverse more demonstrative was correlation between altruistic meanings and traditions ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.51$); and between altruistic meanings and kindness ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.42$). Also, a moderate inverse correlation could be seen between altruistic meanings and comfort ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.34$), independence ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.38$), universalism ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.30$).

Between existential meanings and kindness there is a direct, moderate correlation ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.41$). With the increase in one characteristic the other get more pronounced, too. A moderate, direct correlation could be seen between 'hedonistic meanings' and such values as 'kindness' ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.31$) and 'comfort' ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.30$). We observe a moderate inverse correlation between meanings of 'self-realization' and values of 'independence' ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.30$), 'power' ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.35$). 'Communication meanings' directly moderately correlate with 'traditions' ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.36$), 'family meanings' inversely correlate with 'comfort', 'kindness', 'safety'. The most pronounced, though, moderate inverse correlation was revealed between 'family meanings' and 'kindness' ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.55$) and 'family meanings' and 'safety' ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.55$), respectively. A less pronounced inverse correlation could be observed between 'family meanings' and 'comfort' ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.43$), and between 'hedonism' and 'cognitive senses' ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.38$).

The obtained results show that, on the whole, the predominance and reinforcement of the independence of a person shift away the care for others at the expense of oneself (altruism to an insignificant position) in insignificant positions, as a result of the cognitive awareness and control of one's own life. It is interesting that the more a person adheres to a tradition, the less unselfish or altruistic he/she is in his manifestations. Perhaps this is due to the realities of modern society with its clearly defined course of action, determined rules and traditions that are followed and implemented. The modern young people musing on their lives are characterized with the freedom of choice, striving to experience and to bestow love, to assign a meaning to the very life journey, with tendencies to manifestations of humanity and kind-heartedness. Young people are oriented to the well-being, to obtain a rich system of emotions and sensations, to be happy. The significance of family relationships persists, directly related to striving for safety, orientation to common practice, and the family heritage conservation.

Conclusion

The results of the present study show that young people in the current context of a transitive society build their commitment to values and life meanings in accordance with the relevance of existence. Such values and meanings as: 'safety', 'achievements', 'hedonism', 'independence', 'comfort', 'stimulation', 'self-realization', 'existentiality', 'communication', 'family' are becoming increasingly important. This demonstrates the formation of new personal characteristics of young people. More significant positions hold values and life meanings aimed to enjoy the life pleasure, to grow personally and professionally, and to maintain cultural standards. At the same time, the problems of

the modern society lead young people to a different cognitive awareness and to other approaches in building their own family and personal lives.

The prospects for further research are related to the expansion of the sample and the involvement of the information space parameters.

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Kara, Kruteleva

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