

The Content of Priority Values Among Military and Civil Retirees with Different Levels of Self-actualization

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Abstract

Introduction. This paper deals with the issues of personal values in relation to the late periods of personal ontogenesis. Self-actualization is a criterion for retirees' adaptive readiness for new conditions of life related to changes in social status. The characteristics of retirees' self-actualization should be considered in the context of the subjective approach. An empirical analysis of the value and meaning characteristics in military retirees tests the hypothesis of their dependence on the level of retirees' self-actualization.

Methods. This study employed the Schwartz Value Survey and the Short Index of Self-actualization. The sample comprised 130 individual participants. The design of this study involved the experimental (n = 65 military retirees) and the control (n = 65 civil retirees) groups.

Results and Discussion. The author compared the characteristics of value and meaning sphere in military and civil retirees. Conformity, traditions, and security are value priorities of military retirees. A significant differentiation of individual value choices was observed in the group of civil retirees. The control and experimental subjects demonstrated statistically significant differences in the following value choices: power, achievement, stimulation, universalism, benevolence, traditions, and conformity.

Independence is a value priority for both military and civil retirees with a high level of self-actualization. Power and stimulation are value priorities for retirees with a low level of self-actualization.

Keywords

values, value and meaning sphere, value priorities, retirement age, military retirees, civil retirees, adaptation, adaptive readiness, self-actualization, levels of self-actualization

Highlights

- Conformity, traditions, and security are diagnosed as specific value priorities for military retirees.
- Independence in thinking and choosing methods of activity, self-control and self-management skills are diagnosed as value priorities for retirees with a high level of self-actualization, regardless of their retirement status.
- Values which implementation may be restrained after reaching retirement age, including the desire to achieve a high social status, dominance, the desire for novelty and deep feelings are more pronounced among retirees with a low level of self-actualization.

For citation

Lavrova, O. A. (2019). The content of priority values among military and civil retirees with different levels of self-actualization. *Rossiiskii psikhologicheskii zhurnal (Russian Psychological Journal)*, 16(4), 42–55. doi: 10.21702/rpj.2019.4.4

Received: October 08, 2019

Revision received: January 19, 2020

Accepted: January 23, 2020

Introduction

The concept of 'value' is extremely diverse and multi-level. In foreign psychology, the issues of the value and meaning sphere are examined in the works of A. Maslow, J. G. Mead, G. Allport, C. Rogers, M. Rokich, M. Rosenberg, M. Smith, V. Frankl, E. Fromm, L. Festinger, E. Faris, F. Haider, E. Spranger, etc. In Russian psychology, certain issues of values are presented in the works of A. N. Leont'ev, S. L. Rubinstein, D. A. Leont'ev, M. I. Bobneva, L. I. Bozhovich, V. V. Vodzinskaya, O. I. Zotova, B. C. Mukhina, etc.

Personal values underlie the generation of life meanings (V. A. Yadov, B. S. Bratus, D. A. Leont'ev, A. G. Asmolov, etc.). Value and meaning regulation is a system-forming factor that determines personal self-realization or, conversely, dissatisfaction with the process and results of activity, loss of life guidelines, moral and emotional losses (V. S. Merlin, S. L. Rubinshtein). The dynamics of values reflects changes in personal meaning in life. Changes in life circumstances inevitably entail a reassessment of life values, the transformation and modification of life meanings.

Old age is the period of significant changes in individual living conditions individuals. Most researchers of the late period of personal age-related development (E. Erickson, B. G. Anan'ev, V. Frankl, etc.) associate this period, first of all, with a reassessment of the values and meaning of life. Research interest in the issues of personal value meaning characteristics in old age is obvious (Antsyferova, 2006; Elishev, 2010; Ermolaeva, 2002; Kovaleva, n.d.; Kurulenko, n.d.; Leont'ev, 1996; Mandel', 2015; Sakharova, Umanskaya, & Tsvetkova, 2016; Sokolova & Beretskaya, 2017; Styuart-Gamil'ton, 2010; Khalina, 2009; Bilsky & Schwartz, 1994; Jones, Peskin, Wandeler, & Woods, 2019; Kleineidam et al., 2019; Juang et al., 2018; Löckenhoff & Rutt, 2017; Borg, Hertel, & Hermann, 2017).

Along with other components of individual inner world such as attitudes, ideals, etc., value orientations are considered as components of personal resources for adaptation to changing life conditions (Vyzulina & Yas'ko, 2015; Khalfina, 2018; Nikitin & Freund, 2019; Jones et al., 2019; Teshale & Lachman, 2016; Stawski et al., 2019).

The resource of adaptation is defined as individual qualities that contribute to achieving the desired results by realization of his/her potential capabilities. As stable personal formations, values determine both the content of the goals of adaptation and the means of their achievement. After retirement, individuals find themselves in new conditions of life, to which they need to adapt. Consequently, they need to find new meanings and develop new models of behaviors that are appropriate to changing conditions.

Currently, new concepts reveal still unexplored aspects of the complex and multifaceted phenomenon of psychological adaptation. Personal adaptive readiness is one of such concepts, which represents personal meta-formation ensuring personal readiness for effective interaction with various dynamically changing environments (social, educational, professional, etc.) in the

'personality – environment' dynamic system, viability, and competitiveness in modern dynamically changing conditions. Adaptation readiness is interpreted as a subject's manifestation of his/her potential abilities in the process of experiencing social influences (Arendachuk, 2013; Grigor'eva, 2014; Khmel'kova, 2017; Shamionov, 2015). It seems important to understand the personal and psychological determinants that determine the formation of adaptive readiness in retirees for effective interaction with a changing environment.

In the context of adaptive readiness, personal qualities that ensure successful adaptation in various situations are considered as personal new formations, where personal value and meaning is an element of its structure (Arendachuk, 2013; Khmel'kova, 2017; Shamionov, 2015). The study of the personal and psychological determinants of personal adaptive readiness in the post-labor period of life has a perspective based on the traditions of the subjective paradigm that has developed in psychology (Rubinstein, 2003). If we consider the late period of life, retirement age, as a period of considerable changes, then an elderly person, a retiree, is the subject of changes in the conditions of his/her being. Personal subjectivity is a level indicator (Rubinstein, 2003). This allows us to use personal key characteristics, such as activity, self-determination, self-actualization, self-development, self-improvement, to assess the level of adaptive readiness of individuals in situations of changes. In the context of the current study, we consider the level of self-actualization as one of the criteria for adaptive readiness among elderly persons.

Aim of the study

The presented part of empirical study aimed at testing the hypothesis of the specific characteristics of the value and meaning sphere in military retirees with different levels of self-actualization, which are the criteria for adaptive readiness for a new life situation associated with changes in social status.

Methodological and theoretical basis of the study

The methodological considerations relevant to the present study were general philosophical principles of the unity and interconnection of the phenomena of the material and spiritual worlds, as well as interdependence among the man, activity, society, principles of activity, development, and determinism, considered as the dependence of mental phenomena on the factors that generate them.

The theoretical basis of the study was suggested in terms of certain provisions of activity theory (A. N. Leont'ev); concepts of the subject (K. A. Abul'khanova-Slavskaya, A. A. Brushlinskii, S. L. Rubinstein, etc.), subject-activity (E. A. Klimov, O. G. Noskova, B. A. Yas'ko, etc.), subject-being (V. V. Znakov, Z. I. Ryabikina, G. Yu. Fomenko, etc.) approaches in personality psychology; psychological adaptation theories (Yu. A. Aleksandrovskii, B. G. Anan'ev, G. A. Ball, F. B. Berezin, B. G. Bushurova, I. I. Mamaichuk, Yu. L. Neimer, A. V. Petrovskii, A. A. Rean, S. I. Stepanova, M. G. Yaroshevskii, etc.); concepts of personal adaptive readiness of (M. V. Grigor'eva, R. M. Shamionov, I. V. Arendachuk, A. R. Vagapova, L. E. Tarasova, E. E. Bocharova, O. V. Khmel'kova, etc.); psychology of the late stage of ontogenesis (L. S. Vygotskii, B. G. Anan'ev, L. I. Antsyferova, A. A. Rean, E. E. Sapogova, G. S. Nikiforov, N. E. Vodop'yanova, O. O. Hoffman, M. V. Ermolaeva, O. V. Krasnova, N. S. Pryazhnikov, etc.); basic approaches and concepts of the theories of value and meaning formations as the psychological 'nucleus' in individuals (S. L. Rubinstein, D. A. Leont'ev, A. Maslow, V. Frankl, etc.).

Methods

The study sample comprised 130 respondents of retirement age living in the Krasnodar Territory and the Republic of Crimea. The design of this study involved the experimental (n = 65 military retirees) and the control (n = 65 civil retirees) groups.

For the experimental group, the gender proportion was as follows: 89.2 % male (n = 58) and 10.8 % female (n = 7) respondents. For the controls, the gender proportion was as follows: 86.2 % male (n = 56) and 13.8 % female (n = 9).

The mean age of experimental subjects was 62.09 ± 10.4 years and 61.11 ± 9.2 years for the controls.

Among military retirees, 40 % of the respondents (n = 26) currently worked. The proportion of non-working military retirees was 60 % (n = 39). In the civilian sample, the proportion of working retirees was 27.7 % (n = 18); 72.3 % retirees were non-working (n = 47).

Table 1 shows primary descriptive age-related characteristics of the statistics in the experimental and control groups.

Table 1

Primary descriptive age-related characteristics of the statistics in the experimental and control samples

<u>Characteristics of statistics</u>	<u>Experimental group</u>	<u>Control group</u>
M (\bar{x})	62,09	61,11
σ	10,4	9,2
Mo	70	70
Me	62,5	61,2
As	-0,41	-0,33
Ex	-0,22	-0,25

To achieve our goals, we used the following diagnostic tools:

Schwartz Value Survey for studying dominant personality values. S. Schwartz proceeded from the assumption that the most significant substantive aspect underlying the differences between values is the type of motivational goals that they express. Therefore, he grouped individual values into types of values in accordance with the community of their goals. As a result, ten basic different motivational types were described, in accordance to their main goals (Karandashev, 2004; Schwartz, 1992).

In accordance to the technique developed by the author, for each subject we calculated a mean score in two parts ('Overview of values' and 'Personality profile'). In accordance with the mean score for each type of value, their rating ratio was established. Each type of value was assigned a rank from 1 to 10. The minimum rank (10) was obtained by those values that scored the highest average score. The maximum rank (1), respectively, was obtained by those values that scored the lowest average score. According to the author's interpretation, those values that obtained the highest ranks (from 1 to 3) are most significant for the subject. Values with ranks from 7 to 10 are less significant (Karandashev, 2004).

Respondents' self-actualization levels were diagnosed using the *Short Index of Self-actualization* (Hjelle & Ziegler, 2003; Jones & Crandall, 1986). The scale consists of 15 statements. The authors of the questionnaire confirmed a positive correlation of the Short Index of Self-actualization with all the values of the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI), designed to measure various characteristics of self-actualization in accordance with the concept of A. Maslow. The scale allows us to differentiate the level of self-actualization as high, medium or low.

The statistical analysis of the obtained empirical data was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25 computer statistical program.

Results and Discussion

At the first stage of the study, we diagnosed the individual values of the control and experimental subjects using the Schwartz Value Survey (see Tables 2 and 3).

Values	$M(\bar{x})$	σ	Ex	As
Power	5,41	3,24	0,10	-2,26
Achievement	7,61	2,9	-0,63	-0,8
Hedonism	7,73	2,07	-1,17	1,97
Stimulation	6,13	3,4	0,37	1,13
Independence	6,10	3,92	-0,56	-2,08
Universalism	6,03	3,13	0,09	-1,34
Benevolence	6,51	4,01	-0,16	2,34
Traditions	3,87	3,3	-0,83	0,63
Conformity	2,67	2,6	-0,29	2,06
Security	4,06	2,65	0,25	-1,38

Table 3

Descriptive characteristics in the control subjects (value and meaning characteristics, Schwartz Value Survey)

<u>Values</u>	<u>M(\bar{x})</u>	<u>σ</u>	<u>Ex</u>	<u>As</u>
Power	6,83	2,33	0,21	-2,44
Achievement	6,26	3,01	-0,67	0,92
Hedonism	7,01	3,76	-1,43	2,16
Stimulation	5,27	2,07	-1,65	1,55
Independence	6,48	3,01	0,39	-1,93
Universalism	4,63	3,88	0,99	-1,72
Benevolence	4,22	2,5	0,49	-2,84
Traditions	5,99	4,12	-0,95	-0,87
Conformity	5,43	3,75	-0,39	2,33
Security	5,19	2,98	0,65	-1,19

Taking into account average ranks, we established a rating of values and compared them in each group of respondents (Table 4).

Table 4

Rating of values in control and experimental subjects

<u>Values</u>	<u>Military retirees</u>		<u>Civil retirees</u>		<u>t_{emp.}</u>	<u>Significance of differences</u>
	<u>M(\bar{x})</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>M(\bar{x})</u>	<u>Rank</u>		
Power	5,41	4	6,83	9	3,99	p ≤ 0,01
Achievement	7,61	9	6,26	7	3,06	p ≤ 0,01
Hedonism	7,73	10	7,01	10	0,65	insignificant
Stimulation	6,13	7	5,27	4	3,13	p ≤ 0,01
Independence	6,10	6	6,48	8	0,99	insignificant
Universalism	6,03	5	4,63	2	2,97	p ≤ 0,01
Benevolence	6,51	8	4,22	1	3,06	p ≤ 0,01
Traditions	3,87	2	5,99	6	2,54	p ≤ 0,05
Conformity	2,67	1	5,43	5	2,29	p ≤ 0,05
Security	4,06	3	5,19	3	1,33	insignificant

The distribution of average ranking values in the group of military retirees is between 7,73 and 2,67.

The following values had the highest level of significance for the military retirees (1–3 ranks in the rating):

1. *Conformity*. The defining motivational goal of this type is to restrain and prevent actions, as well as inclinations and incentives for actions that can harm others or do not meet social expectations. This value is derived from the requirement to restrain tendencies that have negative social consequences (obedience, self-discipline) (Karandashev, 2004).
2. *Traditions*. Any social groups develop their own symbols and rituals, which are reflected in traditions and customs. The traditional way of behavior becomes a symbol of group solidarity, an expression of common values. Traditions are realized through the adoption of and adherence to certain norms of behavior. The motivational goal of this value is respect, acceptance of customs, respect for traditions and adherence to them (Karandashev, 2004).
3. *Security*. The motivational goal of this type is security for others and oneself, the stability of society and relationships. According to Schwartz, there is a generalized type of value 'security' – values related to collective security that are largely associated with security for individuals (social order, family security, national security, sense of belonging, and health) (Karandashev, 2004).

The lowest level of significance (7–10 ranks in the rating) was diagnosed for such values as stimulation, benevolence, achievement, and hedonism.

Distribution in average ranks of diagnosed values was between 6,99 and 4,22 in the group of control subjects. This suggests considerable differentiation in individual value choices among the civil retirees.

The following values had the highest level of significance for the civil retirees (1–3 ranks in the rating):

1. *Benevolence*. This is a narrower 'prosocial' type of values, oriented towards well-being in everyday interaction with loved ones. This type of values is considered to be derived from the need for positive interaction, the need for affiliation. Its motivational goal is to preserve well-being in those who are in personal contact with an individual (usefulness, condescension, honesty, responsibility, friendship, and mature love) (Karandashev, 2004).
2. *Universalism*. The motivational goal of this type of values is understanding, tolerance, and protection of well-being. The motivational goals of universalism are derived from those survival needs of groups and individuals that become necessary when people come into contact with someone outside their environment or when the primary group expands its borders (Karandashev, 2004).
3. *Security*.

The lowest level of significance (7–10 ranks in the rating) was diagnosed for such values as achievement, independence, power, and hedonism (Karandashev, 2004).

Using the statistical Student's t-test we compared the two groups to establish significance of differences by each of the diagnosed values. The statistical significance of the differences between the compared groups was confirmed by such values as power, achievement, stimulation, universalism, benevolence, traditions, and conformity. Such values as power ($p \leq 0.01$) and traditions ($p \leq 0.05$) demonstrated higher ratings and, correspondingly, a higher level of significance in the group of military retirees (compared to civil ones). For such values as achievement,

stimulation, universalism and benevolence, higher ratings were observed in the control group, which indicates their greater importance for the civil retirees compared to the military ones.

Diagnostic results obtained after the use of the Short Index of Self-actualization indicated the presence of subjects with different levels of self-actualization in both groups. In the experimental group of military retirees, a high level self-actualization was observed in 18.4 % of respondents ($n = 12$), an average level of self-actualization was diagnosed in 50.8 % of respondents ($n = 33$), and 30.8 % of respondents (20 people) demonstrated a low level of self-actualization. In the control group, 16.9 % of civil retirees ($n = 11$) had a high level of self-actualization, an average level of self-actualization was observed in 44.6 % of respondents ($n = 29$), and 38.5 % of respondents ($n = 25$) demonstrated a low level of self-actualization.

The test carried out using the methods of parametric statistics (Fisher's angular transformation criterion, φ^*) did not reveal any significant differences between the groups by this characteristic. The distribution of respondents in the experimental and the control groups by the levels of self-actualization does not have a pronounced specificity related to the characteristics of their retirement status.

We compared value priorities among respondents with different levels of self-actualization from both groups. Independence was the most significant value ($M(\bar{x}) = 2.07$) in the group of military retirees with a high level of self-actualization. For respondents with a low level of self-actualization, such values as power ($M(\bar{x}) = 4.12$) and stimulation ($M(\bar{x}) = 4.65$) obtained the highest ratings. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5

Value priorities of military retirees with high and low levels of self-actualization

Values	Average ranks $M(\bar{x})$ of values in groups of military retirees with high and low levels of self-actualization (SA)		Comparison of military retirees with high and low levels of self-actualization	
	High level of SA	Low level of SA	$t_{emp.}$	Significance
Power	6,99	4,12	3,17	$p \leq 0,01$
Achievement	8,20	6,13	3,33	$p \leq 0,01$
Hedonism	5,70	8,16	1,04	insignificant
Stimulation	6,31	4,65	3,65	$p \leq 0,01$
Independence	2,07	7,19	3,09	$p \leq 0,01$

Table 5

Value priorities of military retirees with high and low levels of self-actualization

<u>Values</u>	<u>Average ranks $M(\bar{x})$ of values in groups of military retirees with high and low levels of self-actualization (SA)</u>		<u>Comparison of military retirees with high and low levels of self-actualization</u>	
	High level of SA	Low level of SA	$t_{emp.}$	Significance
Universalism	5,44	7,73	0,33	insignificant
Benevolence	4,53	7,99	0,79	insignificant
Traditions	3,52	5,08	2,09	$p \leq 0,05$
Conformity	3,16	6,03	0,99	insignificant
Security	4,12	7,7	0,33	insignificant

We confirmed the statistical significance of differences between the compared groups in such values as power, achievement, and stimulation. These values are more significant for respondents with a low level of self-actualization. The statistical significance of differences between the compared groups in such values as independence and traditions, which, on the contrary, are more significant for respondents with a high level of self-actualization, is also confirmed.

Value priorities of civil retirees with a high level of self-actualization contain independence ($M(\bar{x}) = 3.0$) and benevolence ($M(\bar{x}) = 4.12$). In the group of civil retirees with a low level of self-actualization, value priorities contain achievement ($M(\bar{x}) = 3.01$), power ($M(\bar{x}) = 4.27$), and stimulation ($M(\bar{x}) = 4.35$). Table 6 presents the results.

A statistical comparison between the groups with high and low levels of self-actualization revealed the significance of differences in such values as power, achievement, stimulation, which are more pronounced in the group of respondents with a level of self-actualization. Significant differences between the groups were also observed in such value priorities as benevolence and independence, which are more pronounced in the group of civil retirees with a high level of self-actualization.

The analysis and comparisons revealed the similarity of military and civil retirees with a high level of self-actualization in such a value priority as independence. Power and stimulation were value priorities for both military and civil retirees with a low level of self-actualization. This conclusion is confirmed by a statistical comparison of the value series of military and civil retirees with the same level of self-actualization (Table 7). Significant differences between the compared groups were established only for several diagnosed values. In the group with a high level of

self-actualization, this is benevolence and universalism, which have a higher level of significance among civil retirees. In the group with a low level of self-actualization, these are independence and traditions, which are more significant values for military retirees.

Table 6

Value priorities of civil retirees with high and low levels of self-actualization

Values	Average ranks $M(\bar{x})$ of values in groups of civil retirees with high and low levels of self-actualization (SA)		Comparison of civil retirees with high and low levels of self-actualization	
	High level of SA	Low level of SA	$t_{emp.}$	Significance
Power	8,14	4,27	3,75	$p \leq 0,01$
Achievement	8,01	3,01	3,76	$p \leq 0,01$
Hedonism	6,99	7,98	0,97	insignificant
Stimulation	6,42	4,35	2,71	$p \leq 0,05$
Independence	3,0	7,98	3,42	$p \leq 0,01$
Universalism	4,39	5,07	1,55	insignificant
Benevolence	4,12	5,43	2,68	$p \leq 0,05$
Traditions	5,9	7,54	1,12	insignificant
Conformity	6,01	5,22	1,99	insignificant
Security	5,44	6,38	1,63	insignificant

Table 7

Statistical comparison between military and civil retirees with different levels of self-actualization

Values	Comparison between military and civil retirees with a high level of self-actualization		Comparison between military and civil retirees with a low level of self-actualization	
	$t_{emp.}$	Significance	$t_{emp.}$	Significance
Power	1,23	insignificant	0,12	insignificant
Achievement	1,12	insignificant	0,74	insignificant

Table 7

Statistical comparison between military and civil retirees with different levels of self-actualization

Values	Comparison between military and civil retirees with a high level of self-actualization		Comparison between military and civil retirees with a low level of self-actualization	
	t _{emp.}	Significance	t _{emp.}	Significance
Hedonism	0,23	insignificant	1,56	insignificant
Stimulation	0,67	insignificant	0,33	insignificant
Independence	0,99	insignificant	2,07	p ≤ 0,05
Universalism	2,42	p ≤ 0,05	1,42	insignificant
Benevolence	3,04	p ≤ 0,01	1,29	insignificant
Traditions	1,23	insignificant	2,16	p ≤ 0,05
Conformity	1,98	insignificant	1,23	insignificant
Security	0,33	insignificant	1,96	insignificant

Conclusions

The theoretical analysis enabled us to speak in favour the importance of studying the characteristics of value and meaning sphere of retirees as components of their adaptive readiness for life changes in this period of life. In the context of the subjective approach, the level of self-actualization of retirees is consider as one of the criteria for their adaptive readiness for changes in social status.

The analysis of empirical data enabled us to determine certain specific characteristics of military retirees' value priorities, which may be explained by the features of their previous life and professional experience, compared to civil retirees. A certain similarity of living and professional conditions during the period of military service determines the greater homogeneity among military retirees as a social group compared to civil retirees; it also contributes to more distinct value priorities. According to our research, these are conformity, traditions, and security.

Independent thinking and choosing ways of action, self-control and self-management skills are value and meaning priorities of retirees with a high level of self-actualization, regardless of their status.

The desire to achieve high social status or prestige, control or dominance, the desire for novelty and deep feelings are the value and meaning priorities for both military and civil retirees

with a low level of self-actualization. Obviously, this is explained by limited possibilities of actual implementation of these value priorities during retirement period.

The results obtained in this study may be readily used in practice in the field of psychological support for military personnel in order to form their adaptive readiness for changing living conditions during the retirement period. The value and meaning components of adaptive readiness may be guidelines in psychological work with military personnel.

Undoubtedly, the presented results are intermediate, and their interpretation determines the objectives for the next stage of the study. In particular, we should analyze the features of the value and meaning sphere of retirees in relation to their gender and age, the characteristics of their previous professional experience, as well as a number of characteristics of the current status of retirees, and their role in the formation of adaptive readiness.

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Lavrova

The Content of Priority Values Among Military and Civil Retirees...

RUSSIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL JOURNAL, 2019, Vol. 16, No. 4, 42-55. doi: 10.21702/rpj.2019.4.4

GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSONALITY, HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

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No conflict of interest