

Chapter #7

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS AND PERSONALITY TRAITS IN ADULT PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS: INTERDEPENDENCE PHENOMENA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the interdependence between **interpersonal relations** and personality traits in would-be psychologists. The sample consisted of 115 students (aged between 23 and 45 y.o.), taking a retraining course in practical psychology. The students completed the following questionnaires: The 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (Cattell, 2008), Cook –Medley Hostility Scale, Rosenberg’s Faith in People Scale, Acceptance of Others Scale (Fey, 1955), Agreeableness Scale (scale from the Big Five), Communicative Tolerance and Communicative attitude Scale (Boyko, 2004). The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that all types of relations (except cynicism) were predictors of 9 personality traits, and acceptance of others was the predictor of such integral trait as self-esteem. In turn, several personality traits were predictors of the relations to others (except cynicism too). Thus, we gained a more complete understanding of interdependence between such fundamental psychological phenomena as interpersonal relations and personality traits in psychology students, and the peculiarity of associations between them. The results of the study can help to improve professional retraining programs for psychologists.

Keywords: personality traits, interpersonal relations, adult psychology students.

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of interpersonal relations and factors influencing them in modern socio-cultural context becomes more and more urgent. The situation is determined by the fact that in modern psychology interpersonal relations and personality traits are understood as the necessary characteristics and the criteria of professionalism and maturity of specialists working with people (social workers, psychologists, counselors, psychotherapists and others) (D’Alleo, 2011; Malá & Čerešník, 2015; Froese & Montgomery, 2014). For this reason, an important task of modern professional education is to reveal those conditions, means and methods that make it possible to develop positive interpersonal relations and personality traits relevant for professional activity in students. The study is important because it examines the interdependence between interpersonal relations (attitudes to people) and personality traits, one of the cornerstones of psychosocial functioning and personality development.

2. BACKGROUND

The substantial contribution to the study of mutual influence between the system of interpersonal relations and personality traits was made by the classics of Russian psychology B. G. Ananyev, S. L. Rubinstein, L. S. Vygotsky, V. N. Myasishchev, D. B. Elkonin, etc. In particular, Myasishchev (2004) wrote that interpersonal relations are

the basic factor of personality, while the personality itself appears to be the system of relations and its development is determined by the dynamics of its relations to the world, other people and itself. The quality of relations as a fundamental condition of personal development and subjective well-being in different spheres of life was justified by Rogers (1961; 1980). The theory of interpersonal relations by Schutz (1958) describes the influence of personality social orientation towards other people on interpersonal behavior in the society. Psychological ideas about the role of professionally important qualities in the work of specialists are also of great importance for our investigation. We integrated the ideas of the following psychological fields in our study: the ideas of Russian psychologists about the importance of professional qualities (Derkach, 2000) and the psychology of personality (Cattell & Mead, 2008), The work is also based on the researches devoted to various communicative qualities and types of relations, which determine the development of psychology students (Kenkel & Peterson, 2010; Corcoran & Tormey, 2010). It should be said that most researches define such important professional qualities of would-be psychologists, as social and communicative competence (empathy, acceptance, empathic listening, tolerance, ability to control social interaction and predict its results, etc.) (Aminov & Molokanov, 1992; Bodalev, 1998; Kasantseva & Oleinik, 2002; Valeeva & Karimova, 2014). At the same time, aggression, hostility, manipulations, intolerance and others prevent from successful professional development. Thus, the level of development of these characteristics determines professional growth.

3. OBJECTIVES, METHODS

3.1. Objectives

The main aim of this study was to investigate interdependence between attitudes to other people (cynicism, aggressiveness, hostility, interpersonal trust, acceptance, agreeableness, communicative tolerance and communicative attitude to other people) and personality traits in adult psychology students. There were three key-objectives in this investigation. The first one was to make a psychological portrait of adult psychology students, based on their attitudes to others and their personality traits. The second objective was to find out specific attitudes to people and certain personality traits that could be predictors of each other. The third objective was to explore whether interpersonal relationship (attitudes to others) and personality traits serve as dependent or independent factors.

3.2. Methods

3.2.1. Sample

The sample consisted of 115 students, 96 (84%) females and 19 (16%) males, aged between 23 and 45 ($M=32.5$; $SD=9.4$). All the adult students had already graduated from different universities and at the time of the study, they were taking a retraining course in practical (applied) psychology as part of their further education. This study was held within the courses of “Psychology of personality” and “Social psychology”.

3.2.2. Procedure

The students were tested twice. At first, they filled in The 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (Cattell & Mead, 2008). Then they fulfilled questionnaires investigating attitudes to other people: Cook –Medley Hostility Scale, Rosenberg’s Faith in People Scale,

Acceptance of Others Scale by Fey, Agreeableness Scale (a scale from the Big Five), Communicative tolerance and Communicative Attitude Scale by Boyko).

3.2.3. Measures

To study personality traits of would-be psychologists, the “16 Personality Factor Questionnaire” by R. Cattell was used. According to Cattell & Mead (2008), “The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF)” is a comprehensive measure of normal range personality found to be effective in a variety of settings where an in-depth assessment of the whole person is needed” (p. 135). We used the Russian adaptation (version C) of this questionnaire, which includes 105 questions. Version C includes an additional factor MD that helps to evaluate personal self-esteem (Kapustina, 2001).

For the study of different attitudes to other people, there were used various methods: Cook –Medley Hostility Scale, Rosenberg’s Faith in People Scale, Acceptance of Others Scale by W.F. Fey, Agreeableness Scale (one of the “Big Five” scales), Communicative tolerance and Communicative Attitude Scale by Boyko. The Cook – Medley Hostility Scale, Rosenberg’s Faith in People Scale and Acceptance of Others Scale by Fey were used in Russian adaptation by Labunskaya, Mendzheritskaya & Breus, 2001.

The Cook –Medley Hostility Scale (Russian version) contains 27 statements. For each of them 6-point Likert scale (6 = always, 1 = never) was used. Results of these three subscales (hostility – 5 items, cynicism – 13 items and aggression – 9) were processed according of a key.

The Russian adaptation of Rosenberg’s Faith in People Scale is an express diagnostic method of Faith in People. This scale includes 3 questions with two answers for each of them. The total score ranges between 1 and 3 points (1 point - low faith and trust; 2 points – average faith; 3 points –high faith).

Acceptance of Others Scale by Fey (Russian version) holds 18 statements. Items were administered with a 5-point Likert scale (4 = practically always, 0 = very rare). The total point as a result is calculated (Labunskaya, Mendzheritskaya & Breus, 2001).

Agreeableness Scale (scale from the Big Five) consisted of 15 questions, with two possible answers: “yes” or “not” (the 5PFQ adapted by Khromov, 2000).

Communicative tolerance Scale (Boyko, 2004) consisted of 45 judgments. They had to be evaluated using Likert scale from 0 (strongly disagree) till 3 (strongly agree). Indices for 9 subscales and the general index of communicative tolerance were found. In this study only the general index of communicative tolerance was used for the result’s interpretation.

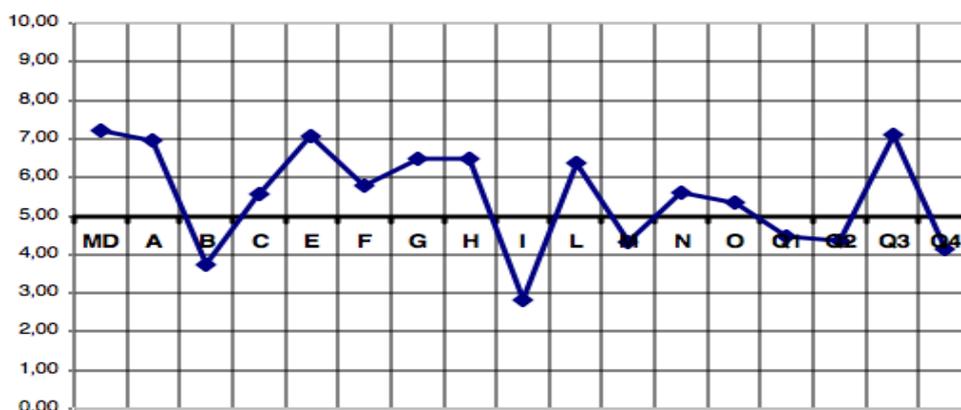
The Communicative Attitude Scale (Boyko, 2004) consisted of 25 judgments that the participants had to agree or disagree with. The scale included 5 subscales describing attitude characteristics. The general level of communicative attitude was calculated.

The data were analyzed using description analysis, multivariate dispersion analysis, Pearson’s correlation analysis, multiple regression and factor analysis.

4. FINDINGS

The results of the study showed that all the personality traits in psychology students are within the norm (Figure 1). At the general scope of variability the data in 10 walls, average values make 5.5 walls. Estimations in 4 and 7 scores specify in insignificant deviations of characteristics of the person from average.

Figure 1. Personality factors (The 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire, Cattell)



Bright expressiveness of quality is connected with an estimation 1-3 and 8-10 walls (Kapustina, 2001). Eight of 115 students (i.e. 6.96 %) demonstrated inadequate self-esteem.

It was discovered that aggression (M=35), agreeableness (9.4) and acceptance of others (M=39) were at the average level, within the norm. Cynicism was at the average level with a tendency to the high (M=54.08; this level has range from 40 to 65). Hostility was at the average level with a tendency to the low (M=16.74; this level has range from 10 to 18). Faith in People was equal 1.3 scores from three marks maximum. Communicative tolerance (M=42.3) and communicative attitude (M=51.38).

We found out a large number of significant correlations between personal characteristics (intellectual, emotional and regulatory ones) and communicative qualities (19 interrelations). The students' orientation to standard behavior was significantly interconnected with a high level of communicative development and successful communications with other people. We also revealed 20 interrelations between various types of attitudes to others. 20 correlations were found between personality traits. Privatness (N) and Self-Reliance (Q2) had no correlation with other characteristics.

To answer the main question of our research about interdependence between attitudes to others and personality traits in adult psychology students, multiple regression analysis was used. We found out that all types of interpersonal relations (except cynicism) appeared to be predictors of personality traits (Table 1). Low level of aggression determined the increase of emotional stability, adaptiveness, maturity (C). High level of aggression was the predictor of such characteristics as Dominant, Forceful, and Assertive (E). Reduction of hostility turned out to become the predictor of higher levels of perfectionism (Q3) (Perfectionistic, Organized, Self-Disciplined). Higher levels of faith in people determined the increase of social boldness (Venturesome, Thick-Skinned (H)) and abstractedness (Abstracted, Imaginative, and Idea-Oriented (M)). Acceptance of others increased Social Boldness, Venturesome, Thick-Skinned (H) and self-esteem (MD) and influenced such features of Abstractedness (M) as Practical, Grounded, Down-To-Earth.

Table 1. Multiple regression analysis: relations to other people as predictors of personality traits

Predictors	Dependent variables										
	A	C	E	F	H	I	L	M	Q3	MD	
	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	
Aggression			-.286	0.002	.260	0.005					
Hostility									-.213	0.022	
Faith in People					.219	0.019		.344	0.000		
Acceptance of Others					.190	0.042		-.219	0.019	.307	0.001
Agreeableness				.210	0.024						
Communicative tolerance	.275	0.003						-.281	0.002		
Communicative attitude					.210	0.024					

Agreeableness became the predictor of Liveliness (F) (Enthusiastic, Animated, and Spontaneous). The level of communicative tolerance helped to predict Warm-heartedness (Caring, Attentive to Others (A)) and trustfulness (Trusting, Unsuspecting, Accepting (Vigilance (L)). Communicative attitude appeared the predictor of Sensitivity (I) (Sensitive, Aesthetic, and Tender-Minded).

Then the influence of personality traits on attitude to others was studied. The results of multiple regression analysis showed that personality traits also were predictors of attitudes to other people (except cynicism) (Table 2).

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis: personality traits as predictors of relations to other people

Predictors	Dependent variables													
	Aggression		Hostility		Faith in People		Acceptance of Others		Agreeableness		Communicative tolerance		Communicative attitude	
	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
A										0.212	0.024			
C	-.035	0.359	-.022	0.229	0.011	0.185	0.036							
E	0.337	0.337												
I	0.222	0.222										0.204	0.026	
L									0.220	0.019				
M			0.297	0.001										
H			0.212	0.016	0.178	0.042								
O					-0.196	0.029								
F							0.210	0.024						
MD		0.248	0.006		0.346	0.000						-0.185	0.044	

The results showed that cynicism wasn't influenced by personality traits as predictors. Three factors had impact on aggressiveness: reactive, affected by emotional stability (C), dominant, forceful, assertive (E), and tough, objective, unsentimental sensitivity (I). The high level of students' hostility was predicted by low self-esteem and emotional instability (C). As for interpersonal trust, its main influential personality traits were the following: M (abstract, imaginative, idea-oriented), H (socially bold, venturesome, thick-skinned) and C (emotionally stable, adaptive, mature). Acceptance was predicted by higher self-esteem,

more expressed apprehensiveness, self-doubting, worry (O), and the average level of social boldness (H). Agreeableness was connected with enthusiasm, animation and spontaneity (F).

The major personality traits predicting communicative tolerance were positive rating of Warmth (A) Warm-hearted, Caring, Attentive to Others and negative rating of Vigilance (L) (Trusting, Unsuspecting, Accepting). The level of communicative attitude was predicted by such personality traits as Sensitivity (I) и self-esteem. The more sensitive, aesthetic, tender-minded adult psychology students were, the more positive their attitudes to other people were. Higher self-esteem determined the lower level of positive attitude to others.

Using the results of regression analysis, we studied what personality traits and attitudes to others influence each other. As a result, 7 types of attitudes and 11 personality traits (including self-esteem) in psychology students appeared mutual predictors (Table 3).

Table 3. Interdependent characteristics

Interpersonal relations	Personality traits
Aggression	Emotional Stability (C); Dominance (E)
Hostility	Self-esteem (MD)
Faith in People	Social Boldness (H); Abstractedness (M)
Acceptance of Others	Social Boldness (H); Self-esteem (MD)
Agreeableness	Liveliness (F)
Communicative Tolerance	Warmth (A); Vigilance (L)
Communicative Attitude	Sensitivity (I)

In other words, knowing the level of personality traits, it is possible to predict, what attitude and with what intensity the students will demonstrate towards other people in communication.

To reveal complex factors, explaining interdependence between personality traits and attitudes to others, factor analysis was used (Table 4). The Screen Plot showed two components.

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component	
	1	2
Hostility	-0.681	
Acceptance of Others	0.611	
Emotional Stability (C)	0.583	
Communicative tolerance	0.494	
Cynicism	-0.488	-0.472
Warmth (A)	0.474	
MD (Self-Esteem)	0.454	
Aggression	-0.442	
Agreeableness	0.418	
Communicative attitude		0.574
Faith in People		0.569
Rule-Consciousness (G)		-0.554
Abstractedness (M)		0.470
Sensitivity (I)		0.444

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotatin Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Into the first factor included hostility and acceptance of others, Emotional Stability (C), communicative tolerance, cynicism, Warmth (A), MD (self-esteem), aggression and Agreeableness: six characteristics, reflecting relations to other people and two personal qualities. The second factor included two types of relations (communicative attitude and faith in people) and three personal qualities (Rule-Consciousness (G), Abstractedness (M), Sensitivity (I)). The following personality traits were not included in one of two factors: Perfectionism (Q3); Vigilance (L); Liveliness (F); Tension (Q4); Social Boldness (H); Privatness (N); Apprehension (O); Openness to Change (Q1); Reasoning (B); Dominance (E); Self-Reliance (Q2).

5. LIMITATIONS

The most serious limitations of this research are a limited sample, prevalence of females over males, use of questionnaires to study attitudes to others, instead of studying real life relationship. It is also possible to carry out a comparative analysis between Russian psychologists and psychologists of other cultures.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

We consider that the further direction of this study could be the investigation of interconnection between interpersonal relations and personality traits connected with beliefs, assumptions and values of psychology students. In the designated context it would be interesting to use the theory of Janoff-Bulman (1989, 1992) which gives the explanation of human conceptual system in terms of higher and lower order postulates. People provided with expectations about themselves, others and the world are able to function effectively and maintain the sense of invulnerability. In addition, we would like to use Schwartz's theory of basic human values because values are a central concept in the social sciences and this theory concerns the basic values that people in all cultures recognize (Schwartz, 2012). Special attention should be paid to Benevolence and Universalism. That is why it is planned to use additionally The World Assumptions Scale (Janoff-Bulman, 1989) and Schwartz value scale.

7. CONCLUSION/DISCUSSION

Based on results of this research, there was made a psychological portrait of adult psychology students that took part in the research. His/her main personal traits were high self-esteem, sociability, both abstract and concrete thinking, dominance tendency, high moral norms, courage in social contacts, high self-control and suspiciousness.

Adult psychology students that took part in our research were characterized by openness, sociability and activity in establishing both interpersonal and social contacts. As for behavior, they showed impulsiveness, social boldness, propensity to risk and readiness to be introduced into new groups and to become leaders. They demonstrated an external orientation towards people and extraversion. Besides, the students possessed such qualities as independence, vigilance to people, flexibility and diplomacy. They displayed conformity reactions of submission to requirements and opinions of the group, acceptance of the standard moral rules and norms, aspiration for leadership and domination (authoritativeness). Emotional features of adult students included emotional stability, high control of emotions and behavior, stress stability to stress caused by self-actualization discontent.

Adult psychology students also had the lowest general communicative tolerance in comparison with tutors, nurses and doctors (research by Boyko, 2004 and negative rather than positive communicative attitude. This fact, in our opinion, can be explained through orientation to norms connected with dominancy motivates adult psychology students to remake, reeducate other people.

Besides, according to Russian researches, many students choose the faculty of psychology in order to learn how to cope with problems concerning their personal growth and development (Dunaitseva, 2005, Priajnikova & Nikitin, 2012).

Comparing students with different self-esteem showed that future psychologists with adequate self-esteem had such personal traits as sociability, emotional stability, high standard behavior, restraint, trustfulness, practicality, self-trust, and boldness, conformity (they followed public opinion, preferred joint activity and joint decision-making, and were guided by social approval). They were characterized by the average level of trust, goodwill and acceptance.

Psychology students with inadequate self-esteem were characterized by high level of emotional intensity, propensity for domination, emotional instability and concrete thinking. High intolerance, negative attitude in communication, low degree of trust, goodwill and acceptance of other people was also typical for them.

According to the results of data analysis, it is possible to make conclusion concerning the first research objective: the majority of psychology students possess personality traits and the level of development of interpersonal relations within the norm.

As for the second objective, it was found out that attitude to other people and existing personality traits are both complicated phenomena and serve predictors for each other. In comparison with all relations studied, acceptance of other people appeared to be the most significant predictor of two personality traits (social boldness and abstractedness) and self-esteem as integral personality characteristic. According to the results of Fey's research (1955):

"Analysis of the data indicated that individuals with high self-acceptance scores tend also to accept others, to feel accepted by others, but actually to be neither more nor less accepted by others than those with low self-acceptance scores. Individuals with high acceptance-of-others scores tend in turn to feel accepted by others, and tend toward being accepted by them" (p. 274).

Another important point is that self-esteem underlies mechanisms responsible for human activity, including professional work. Besides, communicative acceptance between people creates feelings of emotional safety and comfort which is especially significant for psychologists (Rogers, 1980). As the only attitude that didn't predict any personal trait was cynicism, we consider it indirectly connected with personal traits through personal values of students.

The most significant predictors of interpersonal relations among students are proved to be emotional stability and self-esteem. Emotional stability allows to predict the emergence of aggression, hostility and acceptance of others. High emotional stability contributes to better relations to others, as it provides more tolerance and promotes empathy, mercy and balance, which helps to avoid conflicts (Walker & Gorsuch, 2002). On the contrary, people with low emotional stability (with higher neuroticism) tend to manifest anger, flightiness or fickleness, have difficulty in maintaining friendly relations (Klein, Lim, Saltz & Myer, 2004). Emotionally stable people have a positive attitude to others that is an important precondition for developing and maintaining interpersonal relations with colleagues (Xia, Yuan, & Gay, 2009). Psychologists traditionally associate self-esteem with self-worth (Olsen, Brekler & Wiggin, 2008).

Agreeableness of the students was directly interconnected with enthusiasm and spontaneity in relations. It is a fact, that agreeable people are able to establish harmonious relations with others (Ilies, Fulmer, Spitzmuller & Johnson, 2009),

To describe and estimate the quantity of components in a set of observed data factor analysis was used. The first factor was called adequacy and positive attention to other people. Positive communicative attitude and faith in people appeared to be connected with such traits as expedient, nonconforming, abstracted, imaginative, idea-oriented, sensitive, aesthetic, and tender-minded.

The second factor was called sensitive and idea-oriented attitudes towards the world and other people. We believe that the second factor can be understood as fundamental orientation connected to students' values which provide the fulfillment of the first factor in practice. Thus, solving the third problem, we found out that there are two main complex factors which can explain not all the observable interconnections between the studied variables, but some of them.

Interpersonal relations are an integral phenomenon where the change of any characteristic results in changes of all the other parameters and the phenomenon itself. We believe that the average psychological profile demands the development of professional qualities and decrease in the development of those traits that lower its success. It allows setting up specific targets providing the organization of retraining process of adult people for the purpose of changing their personal qualities and interpersonal relations, connected with the efficiency of professional work. To achieve these purpose students-psychologists may attend a course of individual counseling or group counseling as well as take up a specialized course in any approach of counseling.

Aimed at development and optimization of professionally important traits and types of relations, special diagnostics programme was developed. This programme includes primary (when entering the training course) and secondary diagnostics (when finishing the training), individual counseling (10 sessions), taking part in group counseling and communicative skills training for psychologists. This programme is universal, it is adjustable to specific needs of participants. It consists of four main blocks: 1) empathic listening training, 2) empathy training, 3) tolerance scale, 4) conflicts resolution and assertive behavior training. Each block lasts 3 days and 8 hours.

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