



Study

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STUDY OF MECHANISMS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PROTECTION OF FEMALE PSYCHOLOGIST STUDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of the work is to present the results of a theoretical and empirical study of the formation of mechanisms of psychological protection of the adolescent girls in the context of their professional training for the work of psychologists.

Methodology. Sample: 54 students majoring in "Psychology", aged 17-20. All of them were female. Among them, 52% are 1st year students and 48% are 2nd year students.

Methods: The Plutchik-Kellerman-Conte "Life Style Index" questionnaire (Life Style Index, LSI) was used as a diagnostic tool, which allows you to determine the severity of eight main mechanisms of psychological protection and their general tension.

Results. Theoretical approaches to the definition and classification of EDs were considered, as well as an empirical study was conducted on EDs that are most characteristic of female psychology students in the first and second years of study. According to the results of the survey, data were obtained on the degree of severity of each MPZ. It was found that there was a difference between the MPZs inherent in female students in different courses of study. Very primitive protection mechanisms are more common among the first-year students than among the second-year students. During early adolescence, higher psychological defenses are just beginning to form and are not typical for this age. Starting from the age of 18, higher defense mechanisms, as dominant, are observed more often in psychology students.

Key words: Mechanisms of psychological protection (MPP), psychology students, youth.

Relevance

The psychologist's personality is the most important tool in his professional activity. That is why the personal development of future psychologists at the student stage is of great interest for research. Understanding by psychology students what mechanisms of psychological protection (PMZ) are inherent in them will allow students to more adequately assess both themselves and others, as well as build more effective interaction with other people. In addition, the MPZ used by an individual will have an impact on his further professionalization and the professional activity of a psychologist.



The purpose of this publication is to present the results of a theoretical and empirical study of the mechanisms of psychological protection in the context of the professional training of psychology students.

A large number of scientists, including A. Adler, F. Basin, E. Erikson, A. Freud, Z. Freud, E. Fromm, K. Horney, K. Jung, and others, were engaged in the study of psychological defense mechanisms. Among domestic researchers, it is worth noting such scientists as A. Kocharyan, M. Obozov, D. Tytarenko, Ya. Ukrainskyi, T. Yatsenko. V. Havrylkevych and O. Kudryashova were directly involved in the study of mental health problems among psychology students.

All these scientists made a significant contribution to the development of this topic, contributed to the understanding of the phenomenon of MPP, their classification. It should be noted that the available results of empirical research do not make it possible to determine a typical "portrait" of the mental health of students studying psychology. However, they create a scientific and psychological basis for studying this issue.

In the course of the theoretical research, we identified theoretical approaches to studying the mechanisms of psychological protection and analyzed the classifications of types of psychological protection. The theoretical prerequisites for the study of this phenomenon were laid in psychoanalysis. Z. Freud was the first to mention MPP in his work "Defensive neuropsychoses" (Freud, S., 1894). He considered such a phenomenon to be techniques of personal struggle with unpleasant and traumatic experiences that are associated with external or internal conflicts, states of discomfort and anxiety.

In the future, this concept was defined by various scientists. F. Bassin understood defense mechanisms as the dynamics of a system of personal attitudes in the event of a conflict of attitudes. V. Vid and V. Volovik saw in the mental health center a compensation mechanism for mental disability (Mrochko, I. O., Levytska, L. V., 2017). L. Stepanenko studied the defenses of the psyche as mechanisms of self-regulation of the personality (Stepanenko, L.V., 2017).

We adhere to the definition that MPP is a system of personality stabilization aimed at protecting consciousness from unpleasant, traumatic experiences. It is also important that psychological defenses cannot be unequivocally considered as a useful or harmful predictor of the organization of human behavior.

A. Borysiuk, J. Koleman, L. Subbotina, A. Freud, and others were engaged in the development of classifications of protective mechanisms. However, the most interesting for our research is R. Plutchik's classification, the basis of which is the general psychoevolutionary theory of emotions (Plutchik, R., 1979). This author believed that MPPs are directly related to eight basic emotions: fear; adoption; disgust; joy; expectation; sorrow; anger; surprise.

According to Pluchek's concept, emotions are characterized by oppositeness (bipolarity), and therefore the MPP has the same characteristic. In this way, the scientist

reduced 8 defense mechanisms up to four pairs: 1) reactive formation - compensation; 2) oppression - substitution; 3) negation - projection; 4) intellectualization – regression.

Methodology

In 2021-2022, we conducted an empirical study of psychological protection mechanisms inherent in psychology students at the Department of Psychology of the University of Customs and Finance in Dnipro, Ukraine. 54 students majoring in Psychology aged 17-20 took part in it. All of them were female. Among them, 52% are 1st year students and 48% are 2nd year students.

The Plutchik-Kellerman-Conte "Life Style Index" questionnaire (Life Style Index, LSI) was used as a diagnostic tool, which allows you to determine the severity of eight main mechanisms of psychological protection and their general tension. Since each person has several defense mechanisms at the same time, it was decided to take into account one of the most pronounced defense mechanisms for the qualitative analysis of the obtained results.

Results

According to the results of the survey, data were obtained on the degree of expression of each ED in the studied female students. In order to follow the dynamics of the development of MPZ, when analyzing the results, the results were divided into 2 groups: the group of those who study in the first year (17-19 years old), and those who study in the second year (18-20 years old). The results are presented in the diagrams below (see Figures 1 and 2).

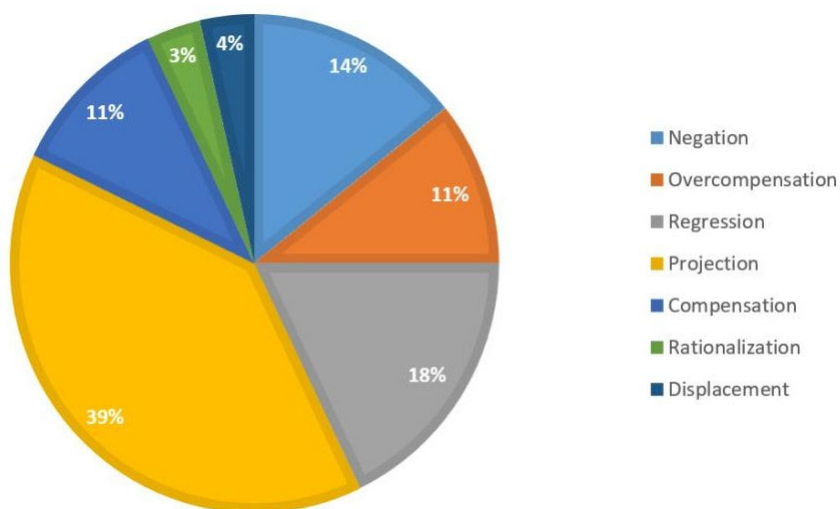


Fig. 1. MPP, characteristic of female psychology students in the first year of study



As can be seen from Figures 1 and 2, projection is the most characteristic of both groups of female students in the ED (39% in the 1st year and 33% in the second year), that is, the transfer of one's own states that cause discomfort to external objects and circumstances. Female students who use projection are usually not aware of their own negative traits, but attribute them to others, or vice versa, attribute the positive behavior of others to themselves.

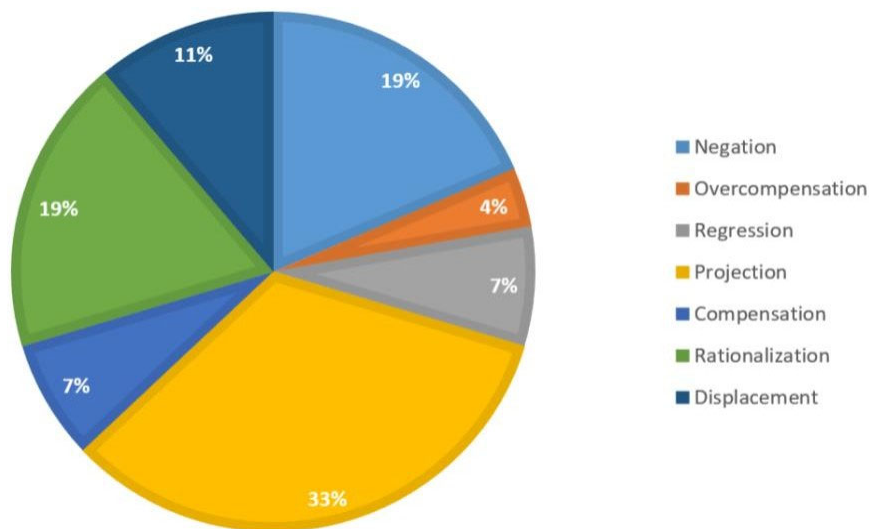


Fig. 2. MPP, characteristic of psychology students in the second year of study

Also, a significant number of students in both groups use negation (14% and 19%, respectively). This is a defense mechanism in which a person either blocks off new information or ignores it, believing that it does not exist. Also, there is no replacement mechanism in both groups.

As for the differences, students of the second year of study are significantly more likely to observe such MPPs as rationalization (19% vs. 3%) and displacement (11% vs. 4%). Also, they use regression mechanisms (7% versus 18%) and hypercompensation (4% versus 11%) much less often than the first-year students.

There are different points of view regarding the classification of MPZs into higher and lower ones. R. Plutchyk himself divided the MPZ into very primitive (denial, regression and projection) and higher levels of personal protection (rationalization and compensation). Features of the comparison groups according to this criterion are presented on the following diagrams (see Figs. 3 and 4).

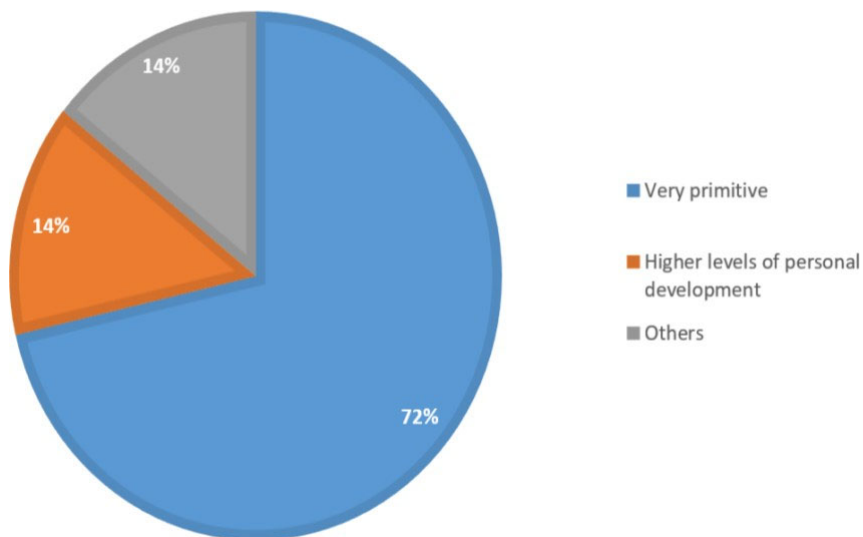


Fig. 3. The correlation of higher and lower MPZs characteristic of female psychology students in the second year of study

As can be seen from Figures 3 and 4, the students of both groups have more primitive MZs. However, in the 2nd year, their significant decrease is observed (from 72% in the 1st year to 57% in the second). In addition, female students of the second year are 11% more likely to have mental disorders, which R. Plutchyk singled out as higher levels of personal development (25% versus 14%)

For the purpose of a more detailed analysis of the formation of higher mechanisms of psychological protection in representatives of youth, we divided the received answers of students into 3 groups according to the age of the subjects (17, 18 and 19 years old) and analyzed which MPZs are dominant in each group. The results were as follows:

- among 17-year-olds, very primitive (84%) are inherent, and only 6% of female students demonstrate higher MPP;
- among 18-year-olds, 45% have very primitive mechanisms of psychological protection, 22% of female students have higher mechanisms of psychological protections;
- among 19-year-olds, 61% of the group have a very primitive MPP, while 31% of female students of this age possess higher MPP.

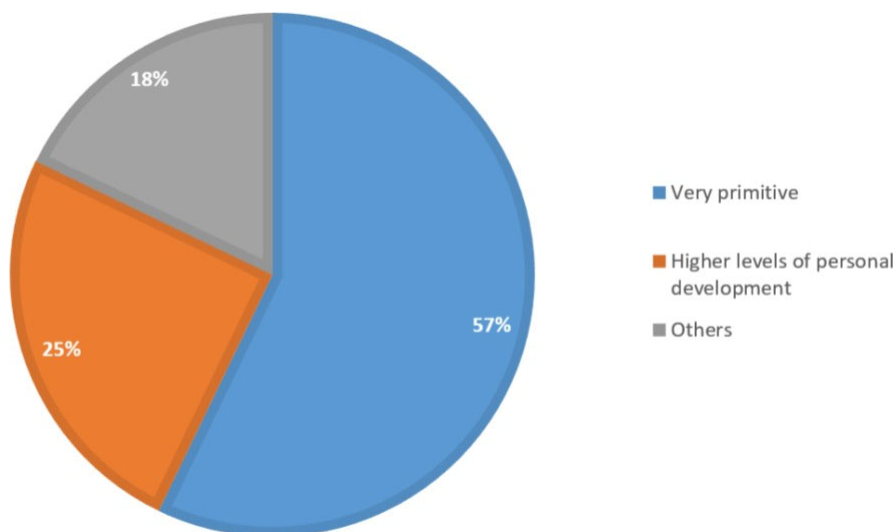


Fig. 4. The correlation of higher and lower MPZs characteristic of female psychology students in the second year of study

Based on these results of the study, it can be stated that among 17-year-olds who start studying at a higher education institution, the primitive MPPs are undoubtedly dominant, and the percentage of higher MPPs is at the limit of statistical error. That is, at the age of 17 (the end of the period of early youth), these signs of higher mental health are just beginning to form and have not yet acquired the character of a typical sign of age. At the beginning of the period of late adolescence (18 years old), female students of higher education institutions typically show signs of higher mental health problems (22%). Starting from the age of 18, such MPZs are actively developing (from 22% in 18-year-old to 31% in 19-year-old female students).

As R. Pluchek claimed, well-developed intelligence, memory and abstract-logical thinking are necessary for the manifestation of rationalization as a mature protective mechanism. Also, a person must have a certain level of self-awareness development. Therefore, the appearance of rationalization as an educational institution is possible only after the end of adolescence, namely in the period of youth, to which the majority of students in Ukraine belong.

The results of our study correlate with the data of V. Gavrilkevych (Gavrilkevych, V.K., 2019), who studied mental health problems in psychology students aged 17-19 years (1st year). According to her data, the leading defense mechanisms of future psychologists are projection and denial. The results of our research and the research of V. Havrylkevych

indicates that the structure of the mental health of psychology students changes during their studies at the higher education institution.

Conclusions

Projection is the most characteristic of psychology students of the Moscow State Medical University. Substitution is the mechanism of psychological protection that is practically absent in psychology students (there is not a single student in the sample who would use this PPE).

The specific gravity of very primitive defense mechanisms is absolutely overwhelming in the 1st course. Higher defense mechanisms are present here as an exception. Higher MPZs are more representatively found in female students of the 2nd year, which allows us to put forward the hypothesis that the age of 18-19 years is sensitive for their appearance and development in girls. This is probably related to the personal characteristics of students at a given age (the level of development of self-awareness, intelligence, especially memory and abstract-logical thinking, etc.) Higher rates of mature mental health in students after the age of 18 may also be related with the completion of adaptation to vocational training, the development of self-observation and self-awareness as a result of studying psychological disciplines, which enables the individual to better notice the peculiarities of his protective reactions.

The obtained results lay the groundwork for the study of the gender personalities of the formation of the students of the MPP in the conditions of educational and professional socialization and their further changes in the processes of the professional development of the personality of a psychologist. The genetic and gender aspects of the studied phenomenon are of particular interest to us.

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