

PSYCHOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF PERSONAL SELF-REALIZATION

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Abstract

The article reveals the psychological foundations of the self-realization phenomenon. It shows that personal self-realization as a self-determined phenomenon is determined by a complex of interconnected personal indicators, including the value of self-development, integral perception of a personal life course, self-acceptance and so on. Psychological meaning of personal self-realization is defined, namely: psychological aspects of self-actualization that support understanding of personal meaning of self-realization. Importance to study objective laws of the process of personal self-realization through its value-semantic mediation is substantiated. An important factor of personal self-realization is *internal motivation*, caused by personal creativity, self-guidance, desires for self-development, a high-status position in social contact, knowledge.

Keywords: *self-realization, motivation, synergy, self-determination, self-organization.*

Introduction

The current stage of psychological science development is characterized by Postnonclassical approaches to research where a person is seen as an active self-determined subject, an agent of person's own life. Therefore, the most urgent psychological issue includes the determination of psychological foundations and resources of personal self-realisation, life goals, values and meanings of life.

Personal self-realisation means development of personal readiness to self-development, manifestation of inclinations and capabilities, which suggest balanced and harmonious development of different aspects of a person with application of adequate efforts to expand personal potential.

That is, self-realization is nothing else than transformation of opportunities into the reality.

Thus, self-realization is a form providing personal development, self-development that is the basis of person's sustainability as a complex, but holistic *self-organized self-determined psychological system*.

One of the main scientific approaches that are the most appropriate for researching of psychological foundations of self-realization is the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The ideas of Deci and Ryan belong to the positive psychology, the aim of which is to develop positive components of human psychology, namely, to determine factors that

stimulate person's innate potential and contribute to his/her self-realization. This theory is aimed at researching of factors stimulating innate personal potential that determines personal growth, integration and health, and at studying of processes and conditions that promote healthy development and effective functioning of persons, groups and communities. In this context, self-determination means a sense of freedom as for forces of external environment as well as for internal forces of personality.

The psychological literature presents a number of concepts that are similar in sound and meaning, such as: self-realization, self-development, self-fulfilment, personal self-determination, self-activity, etc. The prefix "self" is common to all of these concepts and implies something self-causative that comes and is regulated from within. So, this phenomenon is difficult to study and understand.

First of all, *we should distinguish between "self-realization" and "self-actualization"*.

Both these concepts include basic Maslow's idea on innate motivational tendency inherent to all people without exception, to realize their potential and abilities; both terms represent the same process, but self-actualization exists to a greater extent on the inner, subjective level of personal functioning and self-realization does on the external, objective level of personality, as practical manifestation in activities and behaviour of personal capabilities to solve practical problems and, at the same time, to develop personal capabilities in accordance with personal life plans.

Thus, personal self-realization is a broader concept that includes self-actualization as an integral part, as its inner aspect.

The aim of the article is to determine the psychological content of personal self-realisation and to study namely psychological aspects of self-actualization that contribute to understanding of personal sense of self-realization and to creation of an effective program of self-development in various spheres of life.

The study object is the self-realization phenomenon.

The study subject is psychological foundations of personal self-realisation.

Thus, *self-realization* is the process of actualization and implementation of individuality of a person, his/her internal positive and creative pursuit of development, psychological maturity and competence.

This is a complex process to discover personally own abilities, self-images, own capabilities and meanings, to transfer them from a potential state (opportunities) in a current one (reality) and to implement them in the real world, it is a process of searching and assertion of individual life paths, values and existential meanings at any moment of time.

Self-realization implies balanced and harmonious development of different aspects of personality, expansion of personal potential, as long as self-determination prevails over external determination.

Self-determination is understood as person's ability to choose and make selections him/herself, perceive him/herself but not external support, extrinsic stimulus or any other forces that can act as determinants of personal behaviour. In this case, a person, his/her beliefs, desires and aspirations are the source and cause of his/her behaviour, and success or failure is explained by efficiency of self-regulation.

This demonstrates the important role of *internal locus of control and will* to provide self-determination of personal behaviour. One type of motivation that is necessary for personal self-realization is *internal motivation* (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Distinguishing between internal and external motivation is made with the reward criterion for performed activities. At internal motivation, reward is human activity itself. Researchers believe that internally motivated behaviour is based on personal needs to be competent and self-determined during interaction with other people and the environment.

Therefore, according to Bandura (Bandura, 1997), the author of the social-cognitive theory of personality and behaviour regulation, the most substantial mechanism of subjectivity is belief in personal *self-efficacy*. Self-efficacy means belief in personal abilities to organize and implement actions necessary to get relevant results. If people are not confident in their abilities to obtain desired results, then they do not have enough determination to act.

Besides the theory of Deci and Ryan, scientific development of self-determination is also performed within such related areas as: the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), the theory of self-actualization (Maslow, 2008), temporal perspective (Nuttin, 1984), the theory of “flow” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and others. From the standpoint of existential psychology, personal self-determination is characterized by an emphasis on absence of rigid determinism and predictability of human actions, the source of which is personal reflexive consciousness (Boniwell, Osin, & Renton, 2015).

The researchers of the “self-realization” phenomenon in the humanistic psychology distinguish the following components and characteristics of a self-actualized, psychologically mature person:

- extended sense of self,
- a positive self-image,
- holistic approach to own life,
- commitment to activities,
- implementation of creative abilities,
- respect for self and others,
- low proneness to internal conflict,
- feeling of subjective freedom,
- integrity of personality,
- existentiality, and others.

These characteristics of self-realization, together, show how much a person is an agent, an author of own life, how much he/she determines his/her own life activities.

Personal self-realization, his/her individuality is implemented to varying degrees, depending on how he/she is an agent determining the course of own life.

According to the humanistic concepts of self-realization with its idea of continuous *search for personal growth*, it is possible to determine such basic *components of personal self-realization*.

1. The key concept here is, of course, the notion of *autonomy* – a person is independent if he/she acts as an agent, based on deep perception of self.
2. Since a person is not in opposition to the objective world, but in union with it, with that part of it that has values, meanings, importance for him/her, so a personal *system of value orientations* can be considered the second key parameter of self-realization.
3. Personal self-realization, as one of the highest levels of personal formation, is initiated, determined and regulated not only by aspirations. A *belief in personal capacities* as adequate ones to cope with certain activities should also be necessary.
4. According to the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), result attractiveness and confidence in a positive result is insufficient for activation of subject’s motivation. Therefore, *self-efficacy*, which describes how competent and confident a person performing a certain activity perceives him/herself, is a central and important determinant of human behaviour.
5. Also one of the most important factors of personal self-realization motivation is his/her attitude towards him/her (*self-attitude*). As a personal characteristic, self-attitude is closely related with objectives of personal life and activities, with personal values, and it is a major factor in personal stabilization and unity.

6. Yet another important individual characteristic of a person, mediating the process of self-development and self-realization, is future time perspective; this is an indicator to what extent and in what way the expected chronological future is becoming a part of a current living space. The future time perspective arises from motivational goal-setting processes. Accordingly, individual differences in the future time perspective reveal impact on motivation, namely, on orientation to goals, as personal goals include their expectations in the future (Nuttin, 1984).

Methods

The empirical study involved 92 students of 9 universities in Kyiv (Ukraine). The following psychological techniques were used: the morphological test of life values (Sopov & Karpushina, 2002); the test-questionnaire of personal self-attitude (Stolin & Pantilejev, 1988); the Self-Actualization Test (SAT) of Shostrom (Aleshina, Gozman, Dubovskaja, & Kroz, 1987); the self-efficacy scale (Shvarcer, Erusalem, & Ramiok, 1996); the method for study of motivation to university education of Ilyina (Fetiskin, Kozlov, & Manuilov, 2002); the test-questionnaire of achievement motivation of Mehrabian (Fetiskin, Kozlov, & Manuilov, 2002).

Methods for empirical data processing and interpretation: quantitative and qualitative analysis (descriptive statistics, correlation and factor analysis). Processing of the empirical results was carried out using the statistical software package SPSS 21.0 for Windows.

Results and Discussion

First, let us analyze indicators of self-actualization of modern students. Figure 1 presents average values of self-actualization indicators.

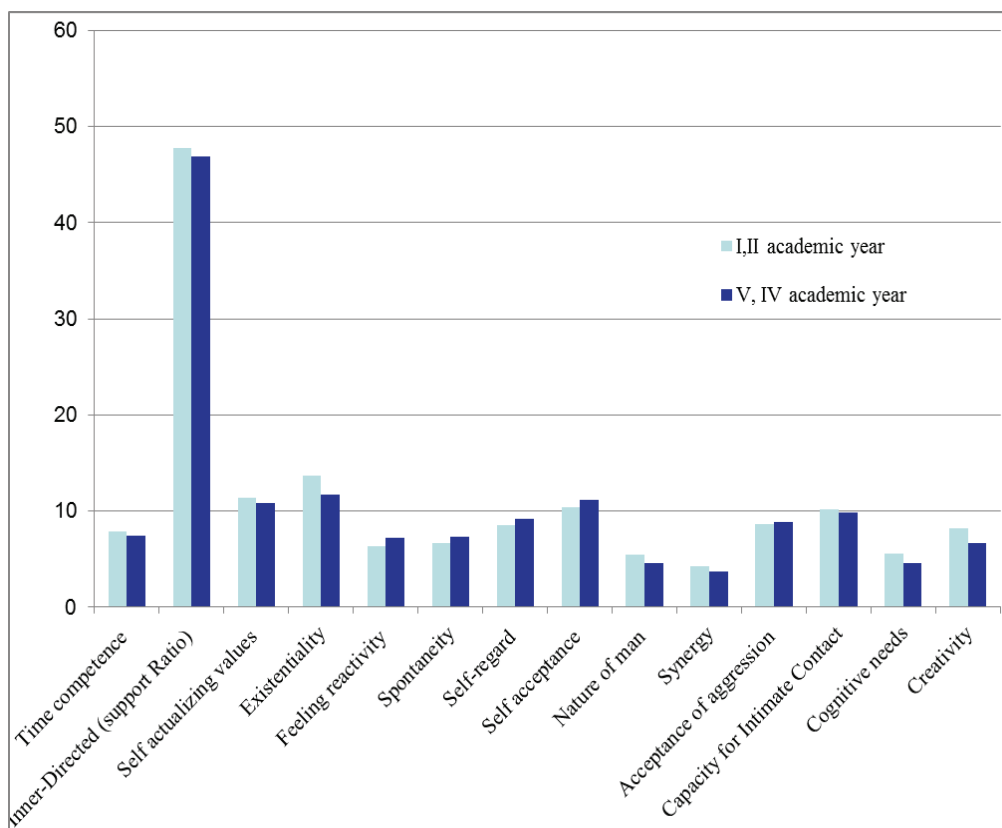


Figure 1. Factors of self-realisation

As the presented results show, the respondents share values characteristic for a self-actualised person, although not at a high level; they are flexible enough to implement their values in their behaviour, at interaction with others, are able mainly to respond quickly and adequately on situational variability; they appreciate their positive traits; in general, the respondents have adequate self-perception, regardless of assessment of their strengths and weaknesses; they are able to accept their irritation, anger and aggressiveness as manifestations of the human nature; they are characterized by the ability to establish quickly deep and emotional close contacts with others.

At the same time, we see a lack of maturity for such personal indicators as “Nature of man”, “Synergy”, “Cognitive needs”. This is manifested at mainly unformed holistic perception of the world and people, at incoherence of the past, the present and the future in a life view, at the tendency to perceive a human nature as a positive one in general, at a desire to acquire knowledge about the world.

Thus, personal resources and potential of self-realization that consist of development of relevant personal indicators can be seen. As a person is able to be developed toward self-actualization just by him/herself, nobody can push him/her into this direction. For this end, fundamentally important conditions must exist that support formation of human personality.

The performed factor analysis reveals 9 factors in the structure of the studied personal system that express aspirations and focus on self-realization; their contribution to the overall data variance is respectively 76% and 72% (results are shown in Table 1).

Table 1. Factors of personal self-realisation

	Self-determination		Determination	
	Factor weight	Factors	Factor weight	Factors
1	24.7 %	Values of self-development, self-understanding, success	25.6 %	Combination of conflicting values of high social status with reluctance to change
2	11.3 %	Supporting of self-esteem and self-acceptance in interpersonal interactions	13.6 %	Selfish, pragmatic values, ensuring of a successful future with use of minimal personal costs
3	10.5 %	Own resources for supporting of self-esteem and self-acceptance	9.2 %	External sources to maintain a proper level of self-attitude
4	7.3 %	Sensitivity toward self and self-blame	5.2 %	Creativity (-)
5	5.5 %	Self-consistency, synergy and spontaneity	4.4 %	Motive to acquire knowledge and self-blame (-)
6	4.7 %	Creativity and cognitive needs	4.1 %	Self-understanding and sensitivity toward self (-)
7	4.5 %	Physical activities	3.3 %	Cognitive needs (-)
8	3.8 %	Motive to obtain a diploma and time competence	3 %	Self-consistency
9	3.2 %	Motive to acquire knowledge and self-sympathy	2.6 %	Motive to acquire an occupation (-)

Such description of factors explains, in general, the origins of personal self-realization that form the motivational focus on self-realization as a self-determined process. This is *internal motivation*, caused by personal creativity, self-guidance, desires for self-development,

a high-status at social contacts, novelty. *External motivation* is a process determined by various circumstances of life – a value model of the society, parents' coercion, wilful coercion to perform educational tasks; it is accompanied by psychological emotional discomfort, low life satisfaction, or even indifference and apathy.

The results show that internal motivation (self-determination) is provided with synergy of unfulfilled needs, is enhanced and supported by personal and social needs of self-development, it is further enhanced under cognitive and affective assessment, which is reflected in integrated assessment of personal resources.

The combination of factors that determine external motivation (determination) is created due to not clear and not differentiated ideas of today's youth about their future, their desire for "beautiful life" without proper understanding of the ways and means to achieve the goals.

A personal focus in general orientation and a personal position, of course, are reflected in educational results and professional development. This is confirmed by correlation analysis. Analysis of correlations ($p < 0.001$) of motives for university learning with value indicators for the studied sample of students with a strong focus on self-realization, reveals (see Table 2) that:

- the internal motives "to acquire knowledge" and "to acquire an occupation" correlate with the values of "spiritual enjoyment", "creativity", "active social contacts", "own prestige", "achievements", "self-development";
- the "success" motive correlates with values of "self-development", "spiritual enjoyment", "creativity", "active social contacts", "achievements";
- the motive "to obtain a diploma" correlates with the value of "high financial situation".

Table 2. Relations of educational motives with value orientations of students oriented at self-realization

	Self-development	Spiritual enjoyment	Creativity	Active social contacts	Own prestige	Achievements	High financial situation	Preservation of identity
Motive to acquire knowledge	-	0.36**	0.34**	0.26**	0.38**	0.38**	0.27*	-
Motive to acquire an occupation	0.39**	-	0.35**	-	-	-	-	-
Motive to obtain a diploma	-	-0.35**	-0.38**	-	-	-	0.28**	-
Motive to achieve a success	0.56**	0.48**	0.47**	0.49**	0.27*	0.53**	0.24*	-

** correlation is significant at 0.001; * correlation is significant at 0.05

Analysis of correlations ($p < 0.001$) of motivation with self-attitude indicators (see Table 3) shows the following:

- the motives "to acquire knowledge" and "to acquire an occupation" correlate with all self-attitude indicators: "integrated assessment of self-attitude" and its components, "self-understanding", "self-esteem", "expectations of positive attitudes of others", "self-interest", "self-assurance", "self-acceptance";

- the motive “to obtain a diploma” correlates with “expectation of a positive attitude of others”, “self-blame” and “self-interest”;
- the motive “to achieve a success” correlates with “self-consistency” and “self-interest”.

Table 3. Relations of educational motives with self-attitude of students oriented at self-realization

	Self-esteem	Self-sympathy	Expectations of positive attitudes of others	Self-interest	Self-assurance	Self-acceptance	Self-consistency	Self-blame	Self-understanding
Motive to acquire knowledge	-	-	-0.34**	-	-0.26*	0.39**	0.23*	-0.33**	-
Motive to acquire an occupation	0.58**	-	0.37**	0.33**	0.37**	0.38**	-	-	0.56**
Motive to obtain a diploma	-	-	0.34**	-	-	-	0.25*	0.19**	-
Motive to achieve a success	-	-	0.27*	-	-	-	0.27**	-	-

Conclusions

The most important psychological characteristics of a person who aspires to self-realization are the degree of activity of his/her own efforts to overcome difficulties of his/her life, a sense of personal responsibility for events that occur with him/her.

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The most significant barriers (obstacles) to self-realization are the follows:

- inability to become a subject of own self-development (the role of such a subject is performed by others);
- underdevelopment of abilities to self-understanding, self-knowing, amorphous self-concept that lead to an inadequate goal setting;
- unformed mechanisms of self-development: self-rejection, misconceptions about own prospects, etc.;
- stereotypes and orientations associated with exaggerated or inadequate importance of other people and so on.

So, formation of socially active and harmoniously developed personality depends, to a great extent, on personal efforts of a person him/herself focused on self-improvement and self-realization as a necessary precondition for success in life.

Choosing paths and means for self-realization, a person must relate his/her desires (“I want” – interests, desires and passions that drive him/her to activity; it is the higher bar of self-realization opportunities that are authentic to personality) with his/her capabilities (“I

can” – self-awareness on capabilities, self-attitude, self-esteem) and with needs, prevalence (“I need” – self-organization, including self-regulation as well as the idea on social demands to personality).

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