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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF TEENAGERS WITH ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOUR: THE ROLE OF LIFE MEANING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

There are various forms of addictions that teenagers indulge in. Soviet and international research show that teenagers' addictions cause problems in interpersonal relationships, increase risk behaviour and is one of the reasons for suicides. Studies have also found that drug abuse problems that started in the teenage years lead to serious abuse problems in early adulthood, although abuse tends to decrease in the late 20s. One of the protective factors from addictive behaviour for teenagers is the 'meaning of life' and spiritual values, which play a major role in impulse control. This study investigated two groups of teenagers; the experimental group using participants with drug addiction and the control group using participants with no addiction. This study examined how teenagers' values predicted adult social roles, civic behaviors, and drug use. Results suggest that attention should be paid to how teenagers think about their future due to the associated links with long-term social and health behaviours. This finding of the study reveals that there are considerable differences both in terms of individual indicators, and on the relationships between the meaning-life orientations and value orientations in the structure of personal life plans of teenagers who exhibit and those who do not exhibit addictive behaviour. The research has shown that psycho-corrective work should take into account the formation of personal life plans of teenagers. Identified characteristics of personal life plans for teenagers who are prone to addictive behaviour can be used for psychodiagnostic purposes when carrying out complex judicial psycho-psychiatric examination or forensic psychiatric examination.

Keywords: Addictive behaviour; life-meaning orientations; values

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1. Introduction

The problem of personal life perspectives in modern psychology is becoming increasingly important as the teenagers today require a meaningful relationship to their personal life paths, and the ability to anticipate, predict and build life plans. Paths of personal development of teenagers and their ability to organize and carry out activities depend on their attitudes to life. There are a significant number of scientific papers devoted to the issue of constructing life plans. Individual biographies and personal life paths were the subject of analysis in many works (Ahmerov, 2013; Golovaha & Kronik, 2014; Kronik & Ahmerov, 2015).

In accordance with this, the Leningrad school of psychology created the new term “the personal life path” (Anan’ev, 2000; Pankova, 2015; Vygotskiy, 1997). This study has delineated the field of problems which remained unresolved in psychology for a long time. Different approaches to the psychology of a personal life path are united by a common idea, which is that life plans are understood in general terms as an activity of person (Lovpache, 2011; Ralnikova, 2014). This activity is aimed at the events of the future, but, in the present time, this activity begins to determine the behaviour and activity of a person, leading to the development of person’s relations with the surrounding social reality.

Psychological problems related to the personal life path are the focus of Adler, Buehler, Muddy, Maslow, May, Frankl, Jung and others. Their scientific heritage is now being used for further study, reflection and development of new psychological research about the ‘way of life’ of the individual and, in particular, the impact of personal life plans on the behaviour of teenagers who are prone to addictive behaviour.

2. Problem Statement

Drawing from classic conceptualizations of values (Rokeach, 1973), the term values describes abstract beliefs concerning the perceived importance of various modes of behaviour and finite states. The values are organized into a coherent system of overarching principles that guide attitudes and behaviours (Rokeach, 1973). These values can potentially serve as an internal compass, directing teenagers in the choices they make as they transition into adulthood. Hundreds of papers from many cultures across two decades have confirmed the idea that values can be reduced into 10 basic value types and four higher-order value dimensions (Schwartz et al., 2012). A fundamental assumption of classic value theory is that values are relatively stable, enduring beliefs that should have long-lasting implications for behaviour (Rokeach, 1973). From this perspective, some have argued that values are a key

component of identity. With identity development as a key part of teenage years, the future plans and values of teenagers could possibly describe intrapersonal changes during this time.

The various forms of future thinking have been shown to be important for understanding motivation and self-regulation (Lazarenko, 2012). Life plans of convicted juvenile offenders characterized by deviant behaviour, which may lead to addictions are regarded in the context of the study of personality orientation problems, the life prospects of offenders, volitional activity, attitudes, and values. The effect of life plans on the behaviour of teenagers who are prone to addictive behaviour, has not been studied in psychology as a separate issue.

The study of the psychological future in terms of the life path from the perspective of the individual's activity is the most productive approach of all ones, as it reviews the individual as the centre of determination of the life path. However, the future as a goal of a personal life path has been studied mainly from the perspective of event-driven approach, considering the chronology and content of future events (Golovakha & Kronik, 2008), and the semantic representation of the future in the world view of the individual remained isolated from research interests up to the present day. The analysis of theoretical and experimental studies allows the suggestion that the psychological characteristics and principles of time aspects of functioning of the future differ from the semantic ones.

The problem of psychological time in teenage years is important, because, in this period, teenagers become aware of themselves and their life from the perspective of time. In our view, it is especially important to study the experience of time among teenagers who are prone to addictive behaviour (Hicks et al., 2012). This is due to the fact that the conditions for the development of normal physical, mental, psychological and social risk group of teenagers prone to addictive behavior, are lacking in the education system and Russian society in general, which do not lead to the desired result - the successful training of teenagers for an independent life in society and social and psychological adaptation.

Our rapidly changing social reality demands new approaches to the study of characteristics of the psychological aspect of time of teenagers prone to addictive behaviour. An identification of problems that prevent young people from making plans for the future will help to provide psychological assistance to these teenagers, which is based on optimizing a personal time perspective (Golovaha & Kronik, 2014). Addictive behaviour leads to a "change in the motivational, meaningful, and value spheres" of a teenager's personality, leading to a distorted perception of time perspectives and deformation in a structure of personal life plans (Lazarenko, 2012; Schreiber, 2005). A maturity of the components related to the future (goals and plans, life prospects, etc.) can be considered as the main indicator of personality

development in teenage years. An important characteristic of the relationship to the future is its overall emotional tone, a positive attitude to the future, as well as its realism: the safety related to the future target resources and means to achieve them.

The classic works of Russian psychology emphasize the importance of real life relationships in the process of the creation of meaning-life orientation. This allowed us to assume that there is a relationship between the semantic aspects of the future of personality and the features of its self-determination in a particular profession. The most productive and developed domestic approach to study of meaning-life orientation of personality is that of Leontiev's (2003), who summarized and systematized the existing ideas about meaning-life orientation in philosophy and psychology. Leontiev (2003) proposed that the methodological approach for studying the meaning-life orientation is based on the unity of three aspects: activity defined by the dynamics of psychological processes of the personal regulation of life activity; phenomenology represented by presentation processes in the world image of the subject of the meanings of significant objects and phenomena; ontology defined by the dynamics of the life relationship of the subject with the world. Leontiev (2003) developed a semantic concept of the personality detailed in the ontological context. In this aspect the semantic reality of a person is achieved due to knowledge of the background and the individual's relationship with it. Personal meaning of time is expressed both in its immediate emotional assessment, and in the degree of cognitive awareness.

3. Research Questions

This paper is devoted to studying the impact of the life plans of teenagers on the occurrence of deviant behaviour. We proceeded from the assumption that the structure of personal life plans of teenagers with addictive or non-addictive behaviour would reveal significant differences in terms of the meaning of life and values. Confirmation of this hypothesis may indicate that the psychological characteristics of personal life plans of teenagers affect their addictive behaviour.

In order to confirm or refute this hypothesis, in the study we conducted an experiment on the influence of personal life plans on the behaviour of teenagers with addictive behaviour, and to perform a comparative analysis of life orientations and values of teenagers prone and averse to addictive behaviour.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of psychological characteristics of personality life plans on the addictive behaviour of teenagers.

The sample included 19 teenagers registered in the juvenile department of the Internal Affairs Directorate №3 in Samara (experimental group), and 19 grade 9 school students (control group). The average age of participants was 14 years. The type of addiction of participants of experimental group was drug addiction.

5. Research Methods

In order to study the influence of personal life plans on propensity for addictive behaviour in teenagers, an experiment was carried out with a subsequent comparative analysis of meaning-life orientations and values of teenagers, both prone and averse to deviant behaviour that led to addictions. According to the purpose of study, the experiment was divided into 2 stages.

1) participants were asked to complete Kleiberg's (2016) test of deviant behaviour, which is a recognised test in Russia. The proposed technique for diagnosing propensity for deviant behaviour is a standardized test questionnaire designed to measure the willingness or propensity of teenagers for various forms of deviant behavior, comprising a set of psychodiagnostic scales aimed at measuring readiness or propensity to implement certain forms of deviant behaviour. The questionnaire includes two options: female and male. The female version contains 107 questions and 8 scales. The male variant consists of 97 questions and 7 scales, except for the last 8th scale of the female version of the questionnaire "scale of adoption of the female social role". One of the scales of the Kleiberg's test is the scale of propensity to addictive behaviour. The method assumes the account and correction of the intention for the socially desirable answers of the test subjects. Within the framework of our research, Kleiberg's test of deviant behaviour was used to form a control group of teenagers, which was not prone to deviant or addictive behaviour.

Criteria for the formation of the control group were:

1. Low results in Kleiberg's test of deviant behaviour;
2. The average level of intellectual development;
3. Good results in academic performance.

Initially, we examined 28 participants who were not registered in the Division of Juvenile of the Department of Internal Affairs, after which a control group of 19 teenagers was formed.

2) Participants of both groups completed two tests: meaning-life orientations' test (MLO) by Leontiev (2003), and "Value orientations" test by Rokeach (1973).

The test of meaning-life orientations is an adapted version of "Life goal" test by Crumbaugh and Macholik (Crumbaugh, 1977; Crumbaugh & Macholik, 1981). The technique was developed by authors on the basis of the theory of aspiration to the meaning and logotherapy by Frankl (Frankl, 1978; Frankl, 1962; Frankl, 1987; Frankl, 1979). The original technique in its final version is a set of 20 scales containing contradictory statements, for example "Life seems to me always exciting and interesting" and "Life seems to me completely boring and routine", measuring the meaningful orientations of the individual. The test subject must indicate whether his/her position is closer to the first statement, to the second statement or is neutral. The meaning-life orientations (MLO) method was developed and adapted by Leontiev himself. The test considers life meaningful if there are goals, satisfaction when reaching goals and the confidence in one's own ability to set goals, select tasks from available ones and produce results. What is important is that a clear comparison is made of goals with the future, emotional background with the present and the satisfaction with the achieved result and the past.

The MLO test includes, along with the general indicator of the meaningfulness of life, five subscales. The components of meaning of life are:

1) Meaning-life orientations – goals in life, the process or interest and emotional intensity of life, and life productivity or satisfaction by self-realization;

2) Locus of control – internal locus of control, confidence in the ability to execute control over one's own life (Naurzalina et al., 2015).

The meaning-life orientations themselves 'correlate with the three components of vital function and temporary orientations in life: goal (future), process (present) and the result (past). Goal refers to 'goals of life' in a certain system of values, the process is the emotional saturation of life and the result is the 'satisfaction with self - actualization' (Leontyev, 2003).

The 'Value orientations' test allows for the diagnosis of features of terminal and instrumental values. Rokeach (1973) viewed terminal values as beliefs that certain terminal goals of individual life is valued enough to move towards achieving those goals. The examples of terminal values are: comfortable life, prosperity, interesting life, feeling of success, peace in the whole world (cessation of wars and conflicts), world of beauty (beauty of nature and the world of arts), equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all), safety of the family (caring for the family), freedom (independence, freedom of choice), happiness (contentment), internal harmony (absence of internal conflicts), public recognition (respect, admiration), true friendship (close friendly relations), wisdom (deep understanding of life) and others.

Instrumental values are beliefs that certain actions or personality features are preferential in any kind of situation. The examples of terminal values are: ambitiousness (hard work, diligence, dedication), latitude of views (impartiality, perceptivity), abilities (competence, effectiveness), cheerfulness (inspiration), cleanliness (neatness), courage (ready to defend one's position), forgiveness (the ability to forgive others), desire to help (willingness to work for the benefit of others), honesty (sincerity, truthfulness), rich imagination (creativity), independence (self-confidence, autonomy), mind (intellect, ability to think), logicity (consistency, rationality), love (sensitivity, tenderness), education (courtesy, good manners), responsibility (reliability), self-control (self-discipline, self-restraint) and others. The diagnostics was performed on an individual basis.

Thus, Rokeach's (1973) method was used in the framework of our study to diagnose the value orientations as criterion of personal life plans: goal values and instrument values.

For the comparative analysis of the results of the MLO test of both groups, we used the nonparametric U test by Mann-Whitney, which is designed for estimation of differences between two independent sample groups simultaneously to compare the obtained results of diagnostics of experimental and control groups of teenagers' meaning-life orientations. In addition, Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to study the impact of personal life plans on the criteria of meaning-life orientations and value orientations on the addictive behaviour of teenagers. When using Spearman coefficient in the correlation analysis we did not need any presuppositions about the distribution pattern of features in the sampled population.

6. Findings and Discussion

The results of present study are summarized in Table 1

Table 1. Statistical indicators on the scales of meaning-life orientations' method (MLO) by Mann-Whitney

Indicator of MLO method	Goals	Process	Result	Locus of control – I	Locus of control – life	Overall meaningfulness of life
U by Mann-Whitney	156.0	145.0	178.0	120.5	132.0	137.5
Significance	0.47	0.30	0.94	0.05	0.16	0.21

Statistically significant differences between experimental and control groups were revealed only on the subscale of locus of control – I (Table 1). This finding suggests that

teenagers in the experimental group do not believe in their abilities to control the events of their lives as much as teenagers in the control group.

The differences between the experimental and control groups were revealed on the level of descriptive statistics on indicators such as locus of control – I, locus of control – life and overall meaningfulness of life. Teenagers with addictive behavior found it more typically frustrating to control the events of their lives, compared with teenagers not prone to addictive behaviour. In comparison with teenagers who are not prone to addictive behaviour, those with addictive behaviour displayed a tendency to consider human life as something beyond conscious control. In general, the overall meaningfulness of life was found to be higher in the control group. This could indicate that a low level of formation of life orientations, as a measure of the personal life plans of a teenager, predetermines teenager's tendency to addictive behaviour.

In other scales of meaning-life orientations' test, significant differences in the U test between teenagers of the experimental and control groups were not found.

The structure of terminal and instrumental values of teenagers in the experimental and control groups was measured by the Rokeach test (1973). According to this test the list of values is given to the tested person, who must mark the values by their significance. The most significant value will get the first rank, the most significant of the remaining values – the second rank, and so on. For terminal values of both experimental and control groups, a block of values of personal life is significant. One should pay attention to the fact that the first and third ranks take the values of "health" and "happy family life", respectively. The difference is that the second rank in the hierarchy of value orientations for teenagers with addictive behaviour takes the "existence of good and true friends", and "love" for teenagers in the control group.

A financially secure life is more important for teenagers with addictive behaviours than for teenagers of the control group, while self-confidence, freedom and independence are more important for the control group of teenagers. Life wisdom and development (work on yourself, the constant physical and spiritual perfection) are more significant for teenagers with addictive behaviour than for the control group of teenagers. The last ranks in the hierarchy of value orientations of teenagers of both groups take such values as creativity, purpose, beauty of nature and art.

For teenagers with addictive behaviour, the second rank takes the existence of good and true friends, rather than the value of love as exhibited by teenagers in the control group. This may be due, perhaps, to the fact that teenagers with addictive behaviour are part of some informal youth group where relations are based on a specific, often not formal friendship code,

but certainly not love. In contrast, the teenagers from the control group, probably, were interested in their first love at that moment more than in a friendship, which corresponds to the characteristics of this age.

The analysis of instrumental values has shown that, surprisingly, teenagers of both groups paid great attention to ethical values and values of communication. In fact, the value of good manners ranked in first place for both groups' of participants while neatness, education and honesty are also important to them. At the same time, teenagers with addictive behaviour consider the value of education more important than honesty and teenagers in the control group conversely put honesty before education. This is a hopeful indication of the values of both groups of teenagers.

Responsibility and independence are more important for the control group of teenagers than for the experimental group. A significance of cheerfulness is more important for teenagers with addictive behaviour. The value of a business – "diligence", is equally important for both groups, but teenagers with addictive behaviour considered that efficiency in business and rationality are more important. The values of communication: courage in defending one's opinion, honesty and advertence – are more important for teenagers of the control group than for teenagers with addictive behaviour. The values of accepting others' intransigence to shortcomings in themselves and others and tolerance are preferred by teenagers in the control group than for the experimental group. The analysis of self-control subscale in Rokeach's test showed that both groups of participants had similar results.

The instrumental values have a stronger correlation with the meaning-life orientations than the terminal values in experimental group. Perhaps this is due to the fact that these young people, above all, are practice-oriented in their life plans.

The relationship between the index of "purpose in life" and indicators of "interesting work", "high demands" of teenagers with addictive behaviour is statistically significant and positive. The relationship between the index of "purpose in life" and indicators of "freedom", "the happiness of others", "education" and "discipline" in teenagers with addictive behaviour is statistically significant and negative. The results of current study suggests that for teenagers with addictive behaviour – a greater number of goals in the future is less significant for them than values such as interesting work and high demands. For the experimental group a greater number of goals in the future was more important than values such as freedom, the happiness of others, good manners and discipline. Perhaps this is due to the fact that a teenager with addiction during formation of future goals, which might give his life meaning, shows certain irrationality.

Freedom and happiness of others as values-goals and good manners and discipline as a values-means play a major role for the experimental group of teenagers who are not able to plan future goals or have difficulties with that. The possible explanation of this result could be a tendency of addictive teenagers to give socially desirable answers. So they prefer, to live for others in the future, rather than to pursue their personal values-goals.

The relationship between the index of "the effectiveness of life" and indicators "efficiency in the affairs" and "high demands" of teenagers with addictive behaviour is statistically significant and positive. The relationship between the index of "the effectiveness of life" and an indicator of "good manners" in teenagers with addictive behaviour is statistically significant and negative. This result could be explained by the fact that teenagers with addictive behaviour, if not satisfied with their self-realization, then lower themselves to the level of the personal unconscious claims without presenting themselves to the highest requirements and assessing its efficiency or inefficiency in business. Thus, it solves the problem of self-realization satisfaction by reducing their personal aspirations. If a teenager with addictive behaviour has a high level of satisfaction with their self-realization, then they are able to appreciate such value-mean as "good manners".

The relationship between the index of "locus of control-I" and indicators "efficiency in the affairs", "high demands" of teenagers with addictive behaviour is statistically significant and positive. This means that social support, strong and good relationships with friends help them to deal with internal locus control and control of their own behaviour. Perhaps this result is explained by the fact that if those with addictive behaviour, do not feel strong and free, they unconsciously begin to evaluate lower "efficiency in the affairs" and "high demands", as they do not believe in their ability to control the events of their lives. If teenagers with addictive behaviour consider themselves as a strong personality, able to build their life in accordance with their objectives, they would be able at the same time to appreciate such value-means as "good manners". Otherwise, the value of "good manners" would not be important for such teenagers.

The relationship between the indexes of "locus of control - life" and "the existence of good and faithful friends", "high demands", "open-mindedness" indicators for teenagers with addictive behaviour is statistically significant and positive. The relationship between the index of "locus of control - life" and an indicator of "good manners" in teenagers with addictive behaviour is statistically significant and negative. The results of the current study explain the fact that teenagers with addictive behaviour tend to think that they are unable to control their life, so the experimental group unconsciously underestimates values such as the availability of good and loyal friends, high demands, open-mindedness, because, they often just believe in

destiny, as in some fatal coincidence. If teenagers with addictive behaviour considers it possible to freely make decisions and implement them, they are able to appreciate at the same time such value-means as "good manners". Otherwise, the value of "good manners" would not be important for them.

The positive correlations between the general indicator of "life meaningfulness" and an indicator of "high demands" in teenagers with addictive behaviour are statistically significant and positive. The relationship between the indicator "overall meaningfulness of life" and the indication of "good manners" in teenagers with addictive behaviour is statistically significant and negative. Those findings suggest that "meaning life orientations" could positively affect teenager behaviour, improve their "good manners" and help to make a good impression on their surroundings, which is very important for teenagers with addiction.

Structural relationships were also identified between the various indicators of personal life plans in teenagers not prone to addictive behaviours. The relationship between the index of "purpose in life" and the indication of "discipline" in teenagers in the control group was statistically significant and positive. The relationship between the index of "purpose in life" and the indication of "strong will" in these teenagers is statistically significant and negative. The study results show that for the control group, the number of goals in the future is less significant than "discipline" value. The increasing number of future plans' influence "strong will" - the ability to take something to an end, rather than discipline, which sometimes prevents some flexibility in achieving goals.

The relationship between the indicator "life process" and the indication of "interesting work" in the control group of teenagers is statistically significant and positive. The relationship between the indicator "life process" and indicators of "freedom" and "strong will" in teenagers is statistically significant and negative. The analysis suggests that the more emotionally intense the life of a teenager, the less significant is the value of interesting work it for them. According to this, the more emotionally saturated the life of a teenager, the more important are such values like freedom and a strong will. The more the teenager lives an emotionally rich life, the more they appreciate strong will, which gives them the opportunity to enjoy life on the basis of their interests, while not ignoring the interests of others. Interesting work as a value-goal may be considered by a teenager as narrowing the scope of an eventful life and prevention factor of addictive behaviour.

The relationship between the index of "the effectiveness of life" indicators and "freedom" and "strong will" in the control group teenagers is statistically significant and

negative. The results suggest that the greater the satisfaction of self-realization in the teenager, the more important are values such as freedom for them and a strong will.

The relationship between the index of "locus of control-I" and the indication of "the happiness of others" among teenagers in the control group was statistically significant and positive. The relationship between the index of "locus of control-I" and indicators "education", "responsibility" and "strong will" in these teenagers is statistically significant and negative. This revealed a directly positive correlation suggesting that the more pronounced the locus of control-I, the less significant are such values as the happiness of others, and vice versa. The resulting inverse relationship suggests that the more pronounced the locus of control-I, the more important are such values as education, responsibility, strong will, and vice versa. Perhaps this result is explained by the fact that teenagers, considering themselves to have a strong, free personality, are not always willing to be guided by others, which is characteristic of this age. Locus of control-I has been associated with teenagers, who are not prone to addictive behaviours, with the value of education, responsibility and a strong will.

The relationship between the index of "locus of control - life" and the indicator "interesting work" in the control group of teenagers was statistically significant and positive. The resulting directly proportional relationship suggests that the more pronounced is locus of control - life in teenagers without addictive behaviour, the less significant is such a value as interesting work, and vice versa. Perhaps this result is explained by the fact that a teenager growing up in today's economic environment, unconsciously does not want to reduce the scope of their vitality only for employment in the workplace.

The relationship between the indicator "overall meaningfulness of life" and indicators of "interesting work", "sensitive" in teenagers of the control group was statistically significant and positive. The relationship between the indicator "overall meaningfulness of life" and indicators of "freedom", "responsibility", "strong will" in these teenagers is statistically significant and negative. Perhaps an interesting job, and sensitivity as values-means and value-goals do not meet modern representations of a teenager, so to treat them as values is reduced. As is shown in our study, a teenager does not always understand what lies behind the concept of "interesting work", as the work can be interesting, but poorly paid, it is possible to prevent young people from appreciating this value. "Strong will" as a value-mean is a central point in meaning-life orientations and values of a teenager, not prone to addictive behaviour. The value-mean "responsibility" is in second place.

7. Conclusion and Implications

Overall, this study shows that there are significant differences both in individual indicators, and on the relationships between the meaning-life orientations and value orientations in the structure of personal life plans of teenagers with and without addictive behaviours. These results may indicate that the psychological aspects of personal life plans for teenagers influence the development of addictive behaviours. Values are often, but not always, related to corresponding behaviours, and often values predict behaviours theorized to be expressive of other values. Maturity of personal life plans of teenagers as a factor of the risk of addictive behaviour is important to consider for the effective prevention of and psycho-correctional work with teenagers. Identified characteristics of personal life plans of an addictive teenager can be used in psycho-diagnostic purposes in a comprehensive forensic psychological and psychiatric examination or forensic psychiatric examination, which will enable more informed and reasonably given expert advice and predict the risk of relapse of addictive behaviours.

The main impetus of this study was to investigate the influence of psychological characteristics of personality life plans on the teenagers, in the hope of identifying potential addictive behaviours, and formulating strategies to help teenagers, develop strong and positive MLOs to guide their development so that they can become happy and useful citizens, who can contribute positively to their community and their nation.

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