
PSYCHOLOGY

Quantitative and qualitative characteristics of personal life strategy

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Abstract. The article is devoted to define the basic qualitative and quantitative characteristics of person's life strategy and study its impact on life satisfaction and mental health. The results of this research prove that people with higher level of consciousness of life and general subjective control on average choose and realize rational lifestyle strategy, which means consciously or unconsciously take position of an active creator of personal life, based on the values of love, beauty, art, kindness and self-development.

Keywords: *life strategy, satisfaction of life, level of responsibility, level of awareness of life*

Introduction. Each of us at some point of time thinks what the life is and what it means. For most people, this question is connected, first of all, with the model of existence, how to live life happily, more dignified, beautiful, joyful and well. We all try to have a beautiful life and keep searching for new methods of achieving this goal. However, the consumer mode of existence, which humanity chooses mostly today, begins to work against us. Inefficient use of natural resources tears living environment apart; ownership of things is becoming the goal itself, greatly impoverishes spiritual life of a person and becomes a major reason of interpersonal conflicts. It puts people into the position of necessity to reconsider their views, attitude towards the neighbor and the world.

The desires of modern humans are sometimes built not on a genuine believe their capabilities, but on desire to win over anyone, including their idealized "I".

Most people are complaining about the current government, which they think, does not provide "the good life" for them, do not even think about the fact that lack of "correct" government is the result of lack of person's faith in its own capabilities. To feel its own force, a person must take responsibility for every action and feel itself being the host of its life.

Thus, we understand the life strategy as a way of life, system of values and goals, the implementations of which, according to the person's ideas, leads to the most happy and high quality life. In other meaning, it is an art to conduct one's own life, which main goal is to find and implement its unique meaning.

The most important life strategy characteristics are level of responsibility, level of consciousness, personal values and human relationships. The main indicators of effectiveness are life satisfaction and psychological health.

Because of the reason that mental health is the goal of psychological practice, we believe that the study of the life strategy characteristics and their consistency will most closely approach the reasons of interpersonal conflicts including those, which associated with life dissatisfaction.

This work is devoted to determinate the basic qualitative and quantitative characteristics of life strategies and learn their impact on life satisfaction and person's mental health.

Literature Review. In psychology, the content of life strategy is considered in the theory of personality. Let us examine some of the social-psychological approaches of life strategies study. All these approaches are somehow reflect the person's need to organize its own life in such

way as to be the most effective in terms of individual understanding of life.

K.O. Abulkhanova-Slavka examined the life strategy problem in russian psychology. The author identified three main features of life strategy: lifestyle choice, resolve the contradiction of "I want – I have" and creating of conditions for self-realization and creativity. Abulkhanova-Slavka believes that personality can be called mature when it can establish a threshold of satisfaction in material needs and begins to consider them as one of the conditions of existence, while focusing their vital forces for other purposes. "This individual ability to switch their life aspiration from material values to others is an indication that the personality began to live it's personal life" [1].

Various typologies of life strategies can be found in social-psychological theories. Based on the social life of personality these theories reveal different ways of realization of desired lifestyle. E. Fromm argues that the market economy based on the relationship of competition affects adversely the mental health and personality development: a person faces a choice – «to have» or «to be», meaning possess maximum amount of material values or to develop personal qualities and powers given to a person by the nature. Frequently, pressured by social values people give preference to "to have" over perspectives of personal development [2]. Personal interests are ignored and this leads to mistakes in life choices. The practice of competitive relationship is putting pressure on people to succeed at any cost. K. Horney considers that in order to satisfy the needs imposed by social templates, a person utilizes three main strategies or personal types of relations with other people starting from the childhood: 1) movement to people – the single purpose of people with such strategy is love and all other objectives are set in order to achieve this love, 2) movement against people – value system of people with this strategy is based on the "jungle" philosophy – life is a struggle for existence, 3) movement away from people – need in independence is diverting such people from any kind of struggle [3].

Ukrainian psychologists identify three main types of life strategies: welfare strategy, vital success strategy and self-realization strategy [5]. Those types are based on generalized ideas about what people seek in their lives. The content of those strategies is determined by the nature of social activity of the personality. Thus, receptive ("consumer") activity is the basis of life welfare strategy.

American psychologists distinguish two groups of life strategies, which are based on superiority of internal and external aspirations. External aspirations, whose score depends on other people, based on values such as corporeal wealth, social recognition and physical attractiveness. Internal aspirations based on the values of personal growth, health, love, affection and society service. It is noted that the choice of strategy depends on the role of parents in the upbringing of a child. Parental autonomy support, emotional support and structuring of requirements for a child usually lead to child's internal aspirations. The dependence of mental health and the choice of different group of values was proved: people who are oriented on external more than internal values have lower mental health indicators. The level of mental health was determined by the method of "Personal Orientation Inventory" in Russian adaptation (methods of measuring the level of depression, vital energy and satisfaction of the life).

Quantitative characteristics of life strategy are responsibility and consciousness of life and we believe, affect life satisfaction, that is - how effective will go the realization of person's life goals. All these characteristics begin to form in the childhood under the influence of education. During the social development and changes in social morality a person could realize the values system and, as the result, its life goals start to have totally different meaning.

The problem of life strategy is close to the eternal problem of life's meaning, and if the first answer to the question "how to live?" then the second - "what should we live for?" Philosophers and writers were trying to understand the sense of life problem during centuries.

Many factors influence mental health. Main ones are taking responsibility for own life, self-knowledge as analysis of yourself, self-acceptance and understanding yourself as a process of internal integration, ability to live in the present, meaningfulness of life, capacity for empathic understanding etc. Experimental part of our research is dedicated to study the influence of some of these factors on life satisfaction.

An attempt to identify the main qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the life strategy was the goal of our research. To achieve the goal we had followed these tasks:

1. Determine the level of the above mentioned characteristics in different experimental groups.
2. Identify the extent how these characteristics affect life satisfaction.

It should be noted that the concept of life strategies should be considered on an individual and personal levels. We did not set ourselves the goal to identify and describe life strategy, which can be the most effective for human life, since the notion of efficiency is always associated with the historical and cultural context.

Method

Participants. The subject of our research was vital semantic orientation, level of subjective control, system of values and relationships. The objects of the research were young people (18 to 30 years old) with specialized secondary and high education. All respondents are representing different social groups and institutions. In total, 85 persons, including 54 women and 31 men were involved in the research.

Materials and Procedure. Methodological tools were represented by the following questionnaires: Purpose-in-Life Test (PIL), Level of subjective control test (LSC) by E.Bazhin, Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) and method of unfinished sentences. These techniques are not only important for scientific research, but also contribute to the clarification and understanding of goals, values and meaning in their lives.

During the experimental research, two groups of respondents (A and B) based on the criteria of consciousness of life and two groups of respondents based on the criteria of social-demographic characteristics (C and D) were flagged: Group A - with high overall rate of meaningfulness of life; Group B - low overall rate of meaningfulness of life. The results of the data analyzed in pairs of groups (A and B, both men and women). The result of the study of groups C and D and the results of correlation analysis are not given in this article and are subjects of the following publications.

Results. The experimental data showed the average values of all indicators of PIL test for men are higher than the average values of women (see table 1).

Table 1. Average value of indicators according to the PIL test

	Objective	Process	Results	Locus control - I	Locus control - life	General indicator of PIL test
Total sample	31.10	25.49	25.28	20.18	29.39	101.5
Men	31.78	26.78	25.97	21.19	30.20	102.9
Women	30.42	24.19	24.59	19.16	28.58	100.1

However, the results of LSC test have some noticeable differences. Thus, men have higher indicators than women for the scale of total internality (It) and internality in the field of production relations (Ip). This assumes that men have higher level of subjective control over any situation in life as well as in industrial relations than women do. For other scales - Internality in family relations (Ifr)

and Interpersonal relationships (Ir) women have more control over their informal relations in comparison with men. Women have also higher level of subjective control regarding health, they believe that the preservation of health and recovery is largely depends on their actions (Ih). (see table 2).

Table 2. Average value of indicators of LSC test

	It	Ia	If	Ifr	Ip	Ir	Ih
Total sample	6.41	6.50	6.17	6.47	5.24	6.49	6.84
Men	6.43	6.46	6.12	6.41	5.28	6.33	6.78
Women	6.39	6.54	6.21	6.52	5.19	6.65	6.89

Note. It=total internality; Ia=internality of attainment; If=internality of failure; Ifr=internality in family relations; Ip=internality in the field of production relations; Ir=interpersonal relationships; Ih=subjective control regarding health.

Continuing the unfinished sentence "For me the most important thing is ..." women answered, "well-being and health of my family", "family happiness", men mostly – "a good job", "stability". It is interesting that in both groups with a high level of subjective control over positive events and situations is observed by scales of internality of attainment (Ia) and internality of failure (If).

Both groups of respondents have a tendency to think that all positive attainments in the life they obtained themselves while blaming bad luck for failures. Despite fairly high values according to both scales (over 6), if compared with average value of primary statistical characteristics of the questionnaire (5.5), in general, the differences of values of all scales of the LSC test are insignificant between men and women.

An unfinished sentence "For me the meaning of life is..." was completed by all the respondents with "in love", "in well-being of my family", "in the life itself". A sentence "I always wanted..." was usually completed with "to be happy". This proves that the meaning of life is not limited to happiness, but could be defined as a final objective of a person, which consists of multiple objectives, achieving which is accompanied with satisfaction, i.e. feeling of happiness.

Some respondents defined the meaning of life in helping others. However, the happiness of others as the personal value occupied low ranks, perhaps because for the person the most important is her/his own family and relatives, and only after that – all humanity. Respondents who found it difficult to continue the sentence the meaning of life or writing "is not defined", "in a fog" had low indicators of Gi (PIL test), but fairly high level of general internality. Higher ranks have values such as knowledge, ac-

tive life and development. Perhaps, despite the low level of Gi, they are highly motivated to find life-significant purposes.

The results of survey showed that respondents associated the concept of life strategy, usually with objectives, planning, achievement, success, and a number of personal characteristics, such as activity, commitment, foresight, perseverance, etc. Most of the respondents indicated that they had their own life strategy, which, according to their ideas, was aimed to achieve important goals, and the effectiveness of its implementation depended on the above-mentioned personal characteristics. Others found it difficult to answer these questions and, as it turned out, these respondents had lower indicators of PIL test, including a scale "Objectives" mean value of the sample was only 27.6 points.

It is interesting that responsibility as a personal characteristic that influences the effectiveness of behavioral strategies, was rarely mentioned by the respondents. However, as the results of LSC test (see table 2), the average level of subjective control across the sample was 6.41 points. (For comparison - the average primary statistical criteria of the survey is 5.5 points.) It is possible that the concept of responsibility has a wider meaning, which includes concepts such as duty, activity, commitment, and is often an unconscious feature of the life strategy.

Analyzing results (see table 3) of the values of the most polar groups based on the criteria of consciousness of life we can conclude that in the group "A" were respondents with the highest level of total index of life meaningfulness (Gi). These were respondents who, according to the results, had specific goals in life, which gives their life direction and temporal perspective.

Table 3. Average value of indicators according to the PIL test

Group	Objective	Process	Results	Locus control – I	Locus control – life	General indicator of PIL test
A	37.10	35.17	30.30	23.85	35.56	127.2
B	25.46	24.15	20.80	16.97	24.87	79.53

Note. A – with high level of General indicator of PIL test; B – with low level of General indicator of PIL test.

Their results in other scales by PIL test, unlike group B, are also quite high. Thus, Group A respondents are more inclined to perceive the process of life as interesting, emotionally rich and full of meaning. They are more satisfied with their lives' passed part (30.3) than those in group B (20.8), and also have a subjective image of themselves as strong individuals who have sufficient freedom of choice to build their life in accordance with their goals and ideas about its meaning. Respondents from group B, in contrast, tend to believe that life does not obey, they don't have control and planning something for the future does not make any sense for them. (see table 3). Group A has high-

er values of indicators by the scales of the LSC test than group B. This assumes that people, who believe that the most important events in their lives is the result of their own actions, have higher level of responsibility.

Higher ranks in both groups have individual life values (by D.O. Leontiev), such as love, health, happy family life [4]. However, with the rest of the values there are some differences. Thus, Group A respondents gave more preference (compared with group B) to values such as creativity, development, natural beauty and art, happiness of the others (see table 4).

Table 4. Average value of indicators according to the LSC test

	It	Ia	If	Ifr	Ip	Ir	Ih
A	8.26	7.39	6.84	7.47	5.88	7.64	7.91
B	4.83	5.38	5.29	5.81	4.27	5.77	5.56

Note. A – with high level of General indicator of PIL test; B – with low level of General indicator of PIL test. It=total internality; Ia=internality of attainment; If=internality of failure; Ifr=internality in family relations; Ip=internality in the field of production relations; Ir=interpersonal relationships; Ih=subjective control regarding health.

However, such values as corporal well-being, entertainment and public recognition showed lower ranks. Unfinished sentence "Sometimes I miss ..." respondents from Group B continued with names of certain objects, while respondents from Group A – with personal characteristics

(activity, courage, etc.). Respondents from group B usually complained on the unsatisfactory health and mentioned that it directly depended on the environment and other external factors; that was never mentioned in the group A.

Thus, we can make a conclusion that people which have lower levels of subjective control are not used to take responsibility for their lives, they do not feel the strength to influence the passage of their life, living with a strategy "to have" (by E. Fromm) in opposite to those who want "to be".

Conclusions. The main characteristics of person's life strategy are to take responsibility for own life, meaningfulness of life, availability of up built values and life goals. The results showed that having goals in life, based on values and relationships, taking responsibility for the implementation of these goals and the process of life significantly affects life satisfaction and mental health.

The results of the study showed that respondents with a high level of consciousness of life, which take the responsibility for the course of events, realizing themselves as masters of their life are more satisfied with self-realization and think that their life is interesting, emotionally intense in comparison to those who do not believe in their ability to have deep influence on their lives. Those people are often not happy with their lives and observe attitudes that their life is under the control of circumstances and other people. Consequently, they are more inclined to neurosis, interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict.

Life goals and system of values, on which this purposes are built, can be attributed to the qualitative characteristics of life strategy, as they reflect its content – human aspiration. We include the level of responsibility and consciousness of life, as they may affect the satisfaction of person's life to the quantitative characteristics of life strategy.

People with higher value of consciousness of life and overall subjective control, as a rule, choose and implement the lifestyle of creativity. Consciously or unconsciously they take a position of active creator of their own life and are based on such values as love, beauty, creativity, kindness and development.

Respondents with low values of general life consciousness but quite high values in terms of subjective control, are highly motivated to find life-semantic purposes. Those persons may not think about the meaning of their life, but at the same time perceive the process of life as interesting and emotionally intense. This suggests that persons have varying levels of awareness of their life strategy, including such characteristics as the consciousness of life.

We believe that the further work in studying the characteristics of person's life strategies should be aimed to a deeper research of responsibility. Responsibility as one of the main characteristics of life strategy has a great impact on the efficiency of main life goals realization by the person and, consequently, on life satisfaction and mental health.

Study of characteristics of life strategy can help the practical psychologists in better understanding of the causes of person's interpersonal conflicts and on this basis to achieve practical steps in mental health improving. Forming ideas about responsibility, human values at an early age may contribute to the harmonious development of the young person and its effective adaptation in a modern crisis society.

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