

Personal Development of Medical Staff at the Stage of their Education

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Abstract

The focus of the report is on peculiarities of personal development of future nurses. Further to the previous research, comparative data obtained from another sample of students of a medical college are given. It is shown that self-esteem is the key personal construct ensuring professional and personal development during this period. Its interrelationship with the structure of values and other personal characteristics essential for medical staff forms the basis for the formation of a professional.

Keywords: Professional and personal development; Educational environment; Personality structure

Traditionally, the problem of relationships of the doctor/medical staff and the patient is considered in the context of specialist's competence. Therefore, training of medical students involves a complex process of acquisition of theoretical knowledge and forming complex skills in diagnostics, treatment and helping sick people. At the same time, it is common knowledge that sufferings of a sick person imply not only physical stress. Many people do not consult a doctor because of the fear of potential presence of a disease. For others, suffering is accompanied by depression due to the loss of the ability to keep to the former way of life. For some people, support and compassion during painful procedures are vital. These circumstances focus our attention on specialists' personal characteristics that ensure effective communication, and give the opportunity to endure continuous emotional overload and cope with complex ethical dilemmas.

The purpose of our research was to study the character of personality structure changes in medical students at the stage of their professional education. It was important for us to trace the development of personal characteristics of future medical staff during their studies and to see whether the traits that are essential for medical profession are formed by the end of their studies.

The obtained results (N=240: 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd-year students of medical college aged 18-21) let us make a "personality portrait" of the graduate and to describe the dynamics of the changes in personality structure of future nurses from year to year [1]. In particular, it was found out that graduates have a poorly expressed orientation towards creativity and cognition, and that they lack altruistic and empathic orientation. Professional activity is not of personal importance and is not perceived as a part of their own "Self".

To confirm the results, a control study was conducted in three years of studies in another medical college (N=190, age 18.5-21) where similar psycho-diagnostic tools were used (7 psycho-diagnostic questionnaires). To process the empirical data we used the methods of Student's *t*-criterion, Mann-Whitney's *U*-criterion and correlation analysis.

It was found out that dominating orientation towards freedom is again in the first position. And the second most important prevailing motivation vector is orientation towards the process. Both factors accentuate *age* features of the sample. For young people, freedom is the main goal. There are no significant achievements in life yet, and the future seems something distant and uncertain. Due to that there are indexes smaller by half for the parameters "power" (M1=3.2; M2=3.49; M3=2.97) and "money" (M1=3.66; M2=4.1; M3=3.8), which rank low

among the characteristics of personal orientation of future nurses. Unfortunately the data were confirmed showing that orientation towards work (M3=4.37) is much less characteristic of 3rd-year students (in the previous sample – of 2nd- and 3rd-year students). At this stage, work is not viewed by graduates as a source of motivation, which shows the appearance of discrepancy between the effort made and the result.

Comparison of the data using R Cattell's method [2] showed that 1st-year students in both samples are characterized by high indexes of *H* factor ("timidity-bravery"). Other similar indexes were low scores in *F* factor ("restraint") and a shift towards greater *straightforwardness* (*N* factor). On the basis of the understanding of these factors, we should conclude that, on the one hand, students can be cautious and taciturn, and on the other hand, straightforward and natural in their contacts. Both characteristics can have negative consequences in the medical profession. Increased anxiety and the tendency to overcomplicate everything interfere with decisive actions in case of providing aid. Taciturnity and caution are often perceived by the sick as inattentiveness and indifference. At the same time, straightforwardness in contacts with patients against the background of their physical condition, worries and hopes for recovery sometimes does more harm than indifference and caution.

However, in contrast to the previous study, in the control study the increase in self-esteem (*MD* factor) was noted by the 3rd year of studies, which indicates the disappearance of insecurity and the increase in independence and self-reliance.

Correlation analysis conducted on the basis of the results of both studies revealed that self-esteem (*MD* factor) of a future medical professional is on the whole a systemically-important psychological factor (Figure 1). In fact, we can speak about formation of a stable construct where self-esteem is inextricably linked with values reflecting normative social attitudes (orientation towards friendship, happiness of others, outlook on life, control of your life). However, we can't but mark the inverse relationship between self-esteem and the level of ambitions. In our view, the obtained

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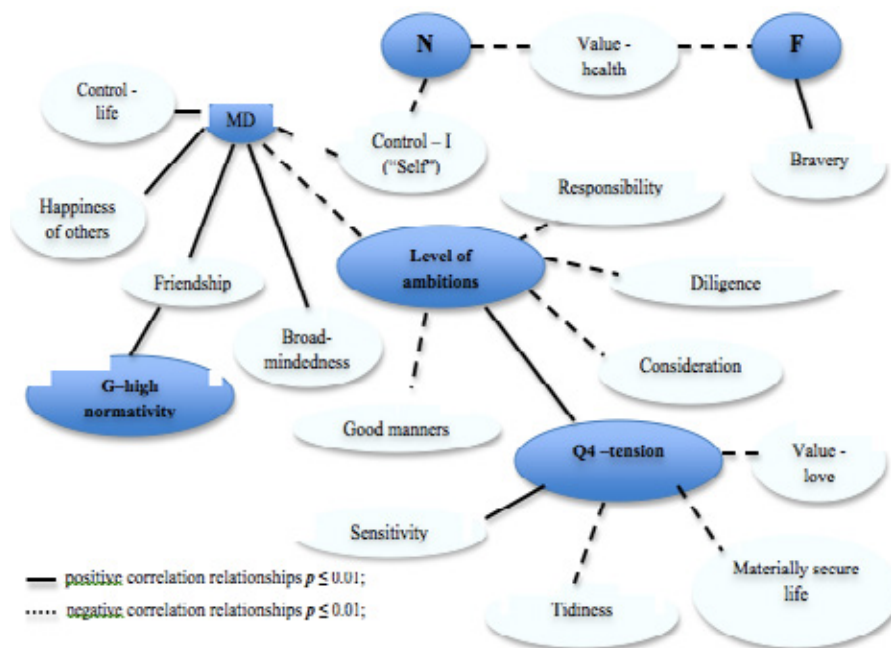


Figure 1: The system of interrelationships in personality structure of future nurses.

relationship plays the role of a compensatory defense mechanism [3]: the lower the level of ambitions, the higher the self-esteem.

Taking into consideration the fact that the level of ambitions has significant inverse correlation relationships with such parameters as responsibility, diligence, good manners and consideration, we can say that the level of ambitions reflects the mechanism of stable personal construct formation through orientation towards yourself and opposing yourself to social standards. Thus, the rise in the level of self-esteem can be linked with active social attitude, successful development of professional socialization in the course of studies of future nurses, as well as with the dominance of individualization process, its deepening and the influence of subconscious conflict mechanisms in the development of the subject's personal construct. It is important to control the source of the increase in self-esteem because in the first case it reflects convergence of professional and personal development [4], while in the second one – blocking professional maturation by means of supporting your own “Self” and getting stuck on your ambitions (D-motivation - deficiency life style).

The results of the control research allow us to make several conclusions. Firstly, we can state the stability of age-related features irrespective of students' educational institution or the year of studies: orientation towards freedom and themselves. It is this tendency that ensures the increase in self-esteem during their studies. Secondly, there is a notable stable decrease in the indexes of restraint and intensification of straightforwardness from the first to the third year of studies. Thirdly, the potential of adequate self-esteem formation through social orientation and socially adopted standards of behavior is poorly actualized and does not play a prominent role in personality formation of a future medical professional.

Discussion

Due to the obtained data, we might need to start thinking about optimization of future nurses preparation taking into consideration the

personality factor. Based on the results of their research, P.A. Chesser-Smyth and T Long [5] state that the development of self-confidence should be considered the central principle of designing programmes for future nurses preparation. However, the authors stress that self-confidence quickly diminishes in the conditions of poor preceptor attitudes, lack of communication, and feeling undervalued.

The ideas of Petit dit Dariel and his colleagues [6] about the possibility of e-learning for future nurses are interesting, and in particular, the point that it is important to take into account people's interaction in nurses preparation.

In Bassi's work [7], a combination of academic education and social work, which gives the opportunity to develop interpersonal communication skills and responsibility, is suggested. The obtained data confirm the effectiveness of such projects for social and personal development of future nurses. Caffrey et al. [8] focus the attention on the need to integrate cultural content into the curriculum for preparation of future medical professionals. This contributes to the development of cultural competences of medical staff. Bradbury-Joence et al. [9] write about giving future nurses more rights and opportunities during practical training. It allows them to control their own efficiency and supports the feeling of self-value (of being valued) in their profession. In another research [10], coping strategies are analyzed which allow students to cope with difficulties in clinical practice.

However, two factors unite the diversity of the research available. The first one is their anthropocentricity. The research is centred on the personality of a future specialist in the system of educational relationships [11]. The second one is the need to form the environment that ensures not only mastering professional skills, but the development of the student's personality [12]. In fact, it indicates the need to switch to a new – anthropological – model of designing professional education, which implies revealing and creating the conditions for professional's personality formation.

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