AUTO-AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR AS AN INDICATOR OF REDUCED HARDINESS

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Abstrac

Purpose of the study: The problem of auto-aggressive behavior has recently become one of the most topical issues in psychology and psychiatry. Hetero-aggression and auto-aggression have common pathogenetic mechanisms, and the resulting aggressive behavior can be directed either at others or at oneself. That is why auto-aggressive behavior is considered not only as actions aimed at doing any harm to one's somatic or mental health, but also as a variant of aggressive behavior in which the subject and object of aggression coincide. Our empirical study, first of all, is focused on studying the problem of changes that take place in the content of the meaning of human life in crisis situations, as a result of which hardiness decreases and, on the contrary, suicidal risk increases.

Methodology: This paper presents the results of the empirical research into the characteristics of the value and meaning sphere of a person who has chosen a self-destructive way to overcome the psychological crisis. The study sample consisted of patients from the toxicological department of the Medical Hospital in the city of Moscow who committed a suicide attempt (incomplete suicide) by drug poisoning. The study sample consisted of 150 people (respectively, 75 subjects in the control and experimental groups). As a psycho-diagnostic instrument in the study, the "Life meaning Orientations" technique (hereinafter referred to as the LMO) was used. Along with the testing, such methods as conversation, including with elements of a clinical interview, and psychological counseling were actively used. The combination of these methods allowed us to study the features of the life meaning orientations of a person in a crisis life situation and who chose a suicidal way out of this crisis.

Results: Auto-destructive behavior is considered as an indicator of a decrease in psychological hardiness of a person in difficult life situations. It is proved that the "internal" causes and factors that determine the choice of auto-aggressive forms of behavior, as a way of resolving a crisis life situation, often take root in the characteristics of the value and meaning sphere of an individual's personality. Acutely experienced dissatisfaction with self-realization and the process of life in the present, often accompanied by a lack of perceived life prospects and goals, causes a person to have low meaning of his life. In this case, the person has underestimation, a simplified perception of life, man, death, the past and present. Usually a sense of certain doom is recognized, the need for human existence, and life itself is not perceived as complete (filled with interesting things and plans, the presence of which gives life interest and richness). The lack or weak awareness of real goals, desires and aspirations is expressed in the absence of everyday intentions - to possess something, to acquire something in the near future, thereby reflecting a low value of

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the "efficiency in business", the presence of which could give the meaning of life at least in the short term.

Applications of this study: The results obtained allowed us to develop practical recommendations aimed at forming and developing hardiness in people in the situation of an acute psychological crisis. To this end, it was recommended to carry out activities aimed at: forming ideas about perceived life prospects and goals; correcting the value and meaning sphere of the individual's personality; increasing the adaptive capabilities of the individual.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The results of the study allow us to draw important conclusions that contribute to the construction of a kind of explanatory model of auto-aggressive behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Various psychological and social problems occupy a prominent place among the causes of auto-aggressive behavior: numerous variants of interpersonal conflicts in the family and the immediate environment, lack of adequate self-realization, various pathopsychological personality disorders, as well as social problems: lack of work, a low level of material well-being, a low level of social contact (Yurieva, 2002; Meninger, 2000; Schneidman, 2001; Bayanova et al., 2019).

Undoubtedly, one of the types of auto-aggressive behavior is self-destructive behavior, in which voluntary death is not the goal. However, our research interest has focused on studying precisely the suicidal activity of a person, in particular, the characteristics of the value and meaning sphere of people who attempted suicide.

The socio-psychological nature of suicidal behavior underlies its definition as a consequence of the socio-psychological maladaptation of a person in the context of experiencing an insoluble microsocial conflict. However, his study is inconceivable without studying the personal aspects, without applying the knowledge of medical psychology and the fundamentals of psychotherapy. Moreover, the researchers themselves, both social psychologists and authors of meaning concepts, speak of the interconnection and inseparability of studying the meaning aspects of personality with sociopsychological problems. B.G. Ananiev (1980) back in the 1960s, drew attention to the fact that "there is a common center where the studies of psychologists and social psychologists lie... This common center is the value orientations of groups and individuals, common goals of activity or motivation of people's behavior".

An important role of processes of the meaning and goal formation is recognized in contemporary social psychology, and it is said that "unfortunately, this problem, traditionally attributed to general psychology, has not yet been specifically developed in its socio-psychological aspects, although the orientation of the person is not only in the system of the relationships that are directly given to him, but also in the system of personal meanings, apparently, cannot be described outside the context of those social "units" in which human activity is organized, i.e. social groups" (Andreyeva, 2000).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the psychological science of recent years, one can note a tendency towards an increased interest in studying various aspects of the value and meaning sphere of an individual's personality and its role in the regulation of human social behavior. Some contemporary researchers pose and solve the problem of studying the meaning sphere and its impact on social behavior in individuals prone to hetero-aggression (Vasilieva, 1997; Efimova et.al., 2002). A number of studies

are devoted to the analysis of the value and meaning ways of experiencing and understanding the events of one's past, present and future, their integration into the holistic picture of their life as mechanisms for determining a real life path in case of a person's alcoholism (Leontiev & Buzin, 1992; Khomik, 1985; Efimova et.al., 2002). The study of the value and meaning sphere is of considerable interest in the framework of the study of post-traumatic conditions and people's experiences of difficult life situations that cause a state of psychological crisis (Mazur, Gelfand, Kachalov, 1992; Olshansky, 1991; Salakhova et.al. 2017; Lipatova et.al., 2015; Bayanova et al., 2020).

In applied psychological science at the end of the 20th century, a number of studies were conducted on the problem of applying the meaning approach to the analysis of the processes of maladaptation and restoration of impaired self-regulation in crisis and post-traumatic conditions (Mazur, 1983; Magomed-Eminov, 1996) But the object of empirical research data was the people who suffered mental trauma after participating in military operations, or who suffered from an earthquake. Thus, the results of these studies did not extend to the field of auto-aggressive behavior, as well as the results of studies of the value and meaning sphere of offenders that were conducted at the same time (Vasilieva, 1997).

In socio-psychological studies of suicide problems, attempts have also been made to study the "internal" factors that determine a person's choice of a suicidal way to overcome a difficult life situation, identifying the distinctive characteristics in the structure of values of the subject (Slutsky & Zanadvorov, 1992). However, these attempts were focused on the study of the system of a person's values, without a comprehensive study of the whole variety of phenomena that characterize the value and meaning sphere and have influence in a certain way on the regulation of the individual's social behavior, including in situations of a psychological crisis.

A complex of empirical studies conducted by the authors of this paper was oriented to the study of the characteristics in the value and meaning sphere of the personality of a suicide. The results of a study of the value and meaning structure of the personality of a suicide can serve as one of the main factors in choosing auto-aggressive forms of resolving complex life situations. The ability of a person to regulate his behavior underlies the very definition of the phenomenon of the value and meaning structure of personality. The meaning sphere is described as "a specially organized set of meaning constructs (structures) and the relationships between them, providing meaning regulation of the integral life activity of the subject in all its aspects" (Leontiev, 2019; Efimova et.al., 2002).

As one can see from the results of the analysis of studies focused on the psychological characteristics in the

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personality of a suicide, the value and meaning characteristics of the personality, for all their importance, were considered by the authors only indirectly, were not chosen as the subject of a separate study.

Without any doubt, the value and meaning sphere has influence on all aspects of an individual's personality, and this is especially expressed in behavior and activity (Goloshumova et.al., 2019). It is difficult to imagine a behavioral act devoid of any value and meaning component. In the words of V. Frankl (2000), even a suicide believes in the meaning - if not of life, then of death.

The meaning of life is one of the most general, integral characteristics of a person's understanding of life and perception of life. "It is absolutely obvious that every person, no matter how absorbed he is in his daily activities and problems, wants not only to live, but also to feel the value of his life, to find some meaning in it "illuminating" and justifying his existence, activity overcoming obstacles, striving for the future" (Tikhonenko, 1984).

The meaning of life, being a psychological reality, regardless of what exactly a person sees this value in, serves as a "concentrated descriptive characteristic of the most crucial and generalized dynamic system of meaning responsible for the general orientation in the life of the subject as a whole" (Leontiev, 2019). The meaning of life is studied mainly from the point of view of how and under the influence of what factors the formation of the meaning of life in individual development occurs, and how the formed meaning of life or its absence affects the vital activity and consciousness of an individual's personality (Oshchepkov et.al., 2019; Agadzhanova and Salakhova, 2018).

According to V. Frankl (2000), the founder of the doctrine of the meaning of life, "everyone strives to make sense and feels frustration or vacuum if this desire remains unfulfilled". It is precisely the "existential vacuum", according to Frankl's observations, that is the cause that generates specific "noogenic neuroses" on a large scale.

The ideas of V. Frankl (2000) contributed greatly to the heightened interest of Russian researchers in the problem of the meaning of life of an individual. Many researchers consider the search and implementation of the meaning of life as one of the highest human needs. For instance, K. Obukhovsky (1972) defines the understanding of the meaning of his life as a necessary condition of normal functioning: "As the property of a bird is the need to fly ... so the property of an adult is the need to find the meaning of his life".

D.A. Leontiev (1992), in the structure of the meaning of life, identified several components, calling them meaning of life orientations, the totality of which indicates the level of meaning of life.

It should be noted that in psychology, meaning is not only the desire for something, not only the future goal determined by the motive, but also the experience that takes place in the process of realizing this motive (or their combination). K.A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya (1992) holds the same point of view, which states that "the meaning of life is not only the future, not only the goal of life, but also the psychological "curve" of its constant implementation" (Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, 1992). In our opinion, the meaning of life is also the ability

of the individual to experience the value of life manifestations of his individuality, his "I", his personality (Oshchepkov and Salakhova, 2018).

Our empirical study, first of all, is focused on studying the problem of changes that take place in the content of the meaning of human life in crisis situations, as a result of which hardiness decreases and, on the contrary, suicidal risk increases.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study sample consisted of patients from the toxicological department of the Medical Hospital in the city of Moscow who committed a suicide attempt (incomplete suicide) by drug poisoning. The selection of subjects in the experimental group was a carefully organized procedure, which in turn included several stages: a medical history of patients admitted to the department, a conversation with the attending physician or the department head, if necessary (for a controversial diagnosis in respect to the patient's mental state), with a psychiatrist. This selection procedure was carried out to exclude people with mental pathology and people suffering from alcohol or drug addiction from the experimental group of our study.

The study sample consisted of 150 people (respectively, 75 subjects in the control and experimental group). The control group of the study consisted of people who did not have suicidal thoughts and intentions, who did not accept suicide as a possible way out of a difficult life situation. This was found out either from a personal conversation with the subject, or on the basis of a conversation with other people. The control group is fully aligned by gender and age with the experimental study group.

As a psycho-diagnostic instrument in the study, the "Life meaning Orientations" technique (hereinafter referred to as the LMO) was used (Leontiev, 1992). Along with the testing, such methods as conversation, including with elements of a clinical interview, and psychological counseling were actively used.

The combination of these methods allowed us to study the features of the life meaning orientations of a person in a crisis life situation and who chose a suicidal way out of this crisis.

RESULTS

An interview of subjects on the basis of the LMO technique allowed us to quantitatively measure the general indicator of life meaning, indicators of various components of the meaning of life, and indicators of the locus of control in samples of the experimental and control groups. In our study, these signs were indicators of the meaning of life: goals in life, the process of life, satisfaction with self-realization, internal locus of control, and, finally, the general indicator of the meaning of life.

According to the results of the study (Table 1), the group with the highest amount of rank values for all the studied indicators is the control group of subjects. In other words, the level of the studied trait (the level of meaning of life and its components) in the control group is significantly higher than the level of the same trait in the experimental group, which was composed of people who made a suicide attempt.

Table 1. Significant differences between the subjects of the experimental and control groups according to the technique "Life meaning orientations"

Indicators of life meaning orientations	Rank values of life meaning indicators in the experimental group	Rank values of life meaning indicators in the control group	U emp.	Significant difference level, ρ
I – Goals in life	1114,5	2125.5	294.5	< 0,01
II – Process of life	1134.5	2105.5	314.5	<0,01

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III – Life outcome	1146.5	2093.5	326.5	<0,01
IV – Locus of control – I	1125	2115	305	<0,01
V – Locus of control –life	1141	2099	321	<0,01
General indicator of life meaning	1077.5	2162.5	257	<0,01

The results of quantitative data processing led to the conclusion that the differences between the levels of all studied indicators without exception, which are components of meaning of life, in the experimental and control groups can be considered significant (p < 0.01).

First of all, suicide attempters showed low indicators when studying the first component of life meaning, designated as "Goals in life". This may indicate that individuals who have made a suicide attempt are mainly characterized by the absence of goals in the future which can give their life the meaning, an orientation and a temporary prospect. It is the absence of such goals that can lead to auto-aggressive actions, in particular, a person's decision to die.

The results on the indicator "The process of life or interest and the emotional richness of life" indicate that suicide attempters more often evaluate the process of their life and its emotional richness very low. According to this, it can be argued that people who choose a suicide attempt as a way out of a difficult situation are much less likely to perceive the process of their life as interesting and full of meaning. Low scores in the study of this indicator show dissatisfaction with one's life in the present. All this can also contribute to suicidal behavior and be its main trigger.

People who have chosen a suicide attempt as a way of resolving a life-threatening situation are much more likely to assess negatively the period of their life that they have lived and less often feel it's positive outcome and meaning. The analysis of the results for the third component in the meaning of life, denoted as "Life efficiency and satisfaction with self-realization" allows us to draw this conclusion which also has low values in the experimental sample.

Analyzing the results on the scales of the locus of control, it can be noted that for both of its indicators ("Locus of control - I (I am the master of life)" and "Locus of control - life or life management") suicide attempters also gave low values

that significantly differed from the values of the same indicators in subjects of the control group. Moreover, such significant differences in the first indicator of the locus of control allowed us to conclude that suicide attempters, to a less extent, think of themselves as a strong personality with sufficient freedom of choice to build their lives in accordance with their goals and ideas about the meaning of life. In other words, suicide attempters are more likely to have disbelief in their strength to control the events of their own lives. The low values obtained in the experimental group for the second indicator of the locus of control ("Locus of control life or life management") are the signs that suicide attempters are often convinced that human life is generally beyond conscious control, that freedom of choice is illusory, and it makes no sense to make any predictions for the future. Such a persuasion can, to a large extent, have a negative impact on the general psychological state of a person, up to the appearance of suicidal thoughts and intentions in him, which may entail the commission of a suicide attempt itself. In this case, in most cases, a person denies his responsibility for committing a suicidal act, often blaming the prevailing external circumstances and events or actions of others in his decision.

We should point out that in most cases, suicide attempters reveal a low general indicator of the meaning of life. This becomes obvious, since it, in fact, is the sum of the values of the indicators in all the factors listed above and

of the indicators in all the factors listed above and subjected to a detailed analysis. Thus, the meaning of life of

a person who has chosen a suicide as a way of resolving a life crisis is characterized by low indicators of all its constituents.

However, as mathematicians themselves indicate when speaking about the application of the methods of mathematical statistics in psychology, "they (methods) are only a means that should not hide a particular goal. It must be remembered that a reliable statistical trend is still not a psychological pattern, and individual values that fall out of the picture are not an artifact, but a reflection, perhaps, of a pattern of a higher order than those that are identified by using mathematical methods" (Sidorenko, 1996). Indeed, according to the classics of psychology, both each individual situation is unique and each individual person is unique as well (Frankl, 2000).

Therefore, in our study, to our mind, a qualitative analysis of results of the survey among people who have made a suicide attempt is of particular importance.

It is important to note that despite the fact that the general values of the meaning of life and all life meaning orientations, including factors of the locus of control in the experimental group were significantly lower compared to the corresponding results of the control group, not every suicide has low values, for example, by the "Goals in Life" factor, however, as by any of the other components of life meaning. Proceeding from this, a qualitative analysis in this study was carried out by comparing the results on the individual components of the meaning of life for each subject, as a result of which we tried to identify several subgroups of suicide attempters characterized by a similar combination of values for various life meaning indicators.

Thus, a qualitative analysis made it possible to identify several subgroups of suicide attempters in the experimental group. The first of these subgroups was made up of subjects who showed low indicators for all, without exception, components of the meaning of life. Note that only one third of the subjects of the experimental group composed this group. This allowed us to conclude that not all people who have made a suicidal attempt as a result of experiencing a life crisis have disorders in the whole structure of the meaning of life. A qualitative analysis of the results showed that among the suicide attempters there are people who have clear and conscious goals in the future, and people who are experiencing the life process clearly and meaningfully in the present, and subjects who are quite satisfied with the period already lived. Moreover, there are suicide attempters with high locus of control.

In our case, it is precisely the different ratio of individual indicators of the meaning of life that determines the uniqueness of each person in his experience of life meaning. This uniqueness must be taken into account when conducting preventive and / or rehabilitation psychological measures with patients.

The next subgroup (12.5% of the entire group of suicide attempters), identified as a result of a qualitative analysis, consisted of subjects with high indicators exclusively for all components of life meaning. Of course, the number of such suicide attempters is small in comparison with the number of subjects in the control group, which are characterized by equally high indicators of life meaning on all scales of the methodology of life meaning orientations, but nevertheless, such cases also exist in suicide attempters. And this cannot be ignored, since such inflated indicators can serve as signs

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of deeper, hidden experiences. When providing psychological assistance to such a person, in our opinion, a deep analysis of the personality of the suicide is necessary to study the motives that made the person to commit a suicide, which becomes possible, for example, through an in-depth clinical interview. Subsequently, work can be carried out by methods of psychotherapy, the choice of which remains with psychologists and should be based on their skills and experience and based on the requirements of the client's situation.

The results of the remaining suicide subgroups that have been identified are of great interest to us. A significant subgroup (25% of all subjects) is made up of suicide attempters, who, as it may seem at first glance unexpected, have medium (normal) and high values for the goal in life, which indicates the presence of plans and intentions for the future among such subjects. But, at the same time, most individuals in this subgroup are diagnosed with low locus of control. This correlation of results suggests that patients with a specific goal and plans in life have any real or imaginary external circumstances that impede the achievement of their goals and the implementation of life plans. And at the same time, a person does not feel able to control the influence of external circumstances and overcome obstacles that have emerged on his path of life. Thus, in these cases, it is possible to say with a high degree of probability that a person's disbelief in one's own forces and / or a belief that a person's life is generally not subject to conscious control makes a person commit a suicidal act, responsibility for which is also attributed to external forces and circumstances. According to our own observations, when working with suicide attempters, most of these attempts are untrue, often of a demonstrative nature. There is no doubt about the conclusion that the work of a psychologist in such cases should consist precisely in correcting the locus of control in a person, in increasing the significance of the person for himself, in developing patient's self-confidence, and increasing his self-esteem. For this purpose, it is possible to recommend patients, for example, participation in a personal growth training.

The results of the analysis, which allowed us to identify another subgroup of suicide attempters represent no less interest. The structure of the meaning of life among the subjects who made up this subgroup is characterized, in contrast to the suicide attempters of the first subgroup, by of the "Goals in Life" indicator. This suggests that a person lives today or yesterday and does not have specific, conscious plans for the future. At the same time, suicide attempters of this group show high indices of the locus of control, and in both of its aspects. That is, such people fully feel their ability to make decisions independently, make informed choices, control the course of their lives, and more often take responsibility for their of the considered actions. Comparing the values indicators in the subjects of this group, we can conclude that often a person's awareness of the absence or loss of his life goals, future prospects and opportunities for further normal existence and development, entails the adoption of an informed decision about the intentional deprivation of life, as the last way to overcome a psychologically difficult situation. It is in such cases that true suicidal acts are usually committed. It becomes necessary to carry psychotherapeutic work with such patients to find and realize a person's goals in his life, in parallel with the correction of other life meaning orientations, in which negative changes are also diagnosed. For example, such changes can be found frequently in such a component of the meaning of life as "The process and emotional richness of life", when a person not only realizes the lack of goals in the future, but also does not perceive the process of life in the present as interesting

and full of meaning.

The results of other subjects who were not included in any of the identified subgroups represent single cases of a combination of life meaning indicators.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the study allow us to draw important conclusions that contribute to the construction of a kind of explanatory model of auto-aggressive behavior. "Internal" causes and factors that determine the choice of autoaggressive forms of behavior, in particular, suicide, as a way to resolve a crisis life situation, often take root in the characteristics of the value-meaning sphere of personality. Acutely experienced dissatisfaction with self-realization and the process of life in the present, often accompanied by a lack of conscious life prospects and goals, causes a person to have a low meaning of his life. In this case, the person has underestimation, a simplified perception of life, man, death, the past and present (Efimova et.al., 2002). Usually certain doom is recognized, the need for human existence, and life itself is not perceived as complete (filled with interesting things and plans, the presence of which gives life interest and richness). The absence or weak awareness of real goals, desires and aspirations is expressed even in the absence of "non-global", everyday intentions — to possess something, to acquire something in the near future, thereby reflecting a low significance of the "efficiency in business", the presence of which could give their life the meaning at least in the short term.

Moreover, the inversion mechanism often comes into action when perceiving the very categories of life and death - death gains more positive characteristics, and begins to be seen as the most acceptable, and often the only way out of their difficult life situation. Moreover, in some cases of true suicide, death itself becomes the goal, the only aspiration of man. In this case, we can conclude that a person, not finding a meaning in life, seeks it in death, attributing to it all the "life" values (beauty, simplicity, lightness, meaning). Death becomes something attractive: everything that a person does not find in life, he tries to find in death.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

We acknowledge that the research results reflect the general picture of the peculiarities of the value and meaning sphere of a person in a difficult life situation, who chose an autoaggressive way out of this situation. We intend to continue our research and identify the dynamics of the formation and development of hardiness among people who have made a suicidal attempt.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest in this paper. E.V. Kamneva and A.V. Romanova developed a methodology, interpreted the results, and wrote the article. B.S. Vasyakin and M.N. Mikhaylovsky organized and conducted a study, carried out statistical analysis, tested the hypothesis, interpreted the results. O.V. Mizonova carried out a theoretical analysis of the problem under study and improved the research methodology.

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