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Experiences in the activities and psychological resources of students

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Abstract

Context and relevance. In examining activity experiences, the authors rely on their study on the theory of self-determination, where the question of the connection between experiences in activity and psychological resources remains open. The aim of the study was to examine experiences in educational and professional activity as well as in psychological resources of students. Hypothesis. Students whose profile of typical experiences in the process of educational and professional activities is close to optimal will be characterized by a higher level of self-control and self-compassion, as well as lower rates of emotional burnout. Methods and materials. One hundred sixty-five university students aged 18 to 22 (M = 19,1, SD = 0,96) participated in the study. The following methods were used: 'Diagnostics of Experiences in Professional Activity' (E.N. Osin, D.A. Leontiev), 'Self-Compassion' (K. Neff, adapted by K.A. Chistopolskaya, E.N. Osin et al.), 'Brief Self-Control Scale' (T.O. Gordeeva, E.N. Osin), and the 'Emotional Burnout Questionnaire' (K. Maslach, S. Jackson, adapted by N.E. Vodopyanova). The results showed that the components of optimal experience (pleasure, sense) are positively associated with compassionate attitude towards oneself and self-control, while the experience of emptiness in activity is associated with emotional burnout and negative attitude towards oneself, especially in a situation of failure. It was revealed that students whose profile of typical experiences in the process of educational and professional activity is close to optimal have a greater ability to manage their behavior, emotions and high emotional tone. Conclusions. It is shown that studying students' experiences and their psychological resources is promising. The obtained results set the task for the higher education: to find individual trajectories of students' professional development.

Keywords: personality, experience in activity, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, self-compassion, self-control, psychological resources, experience

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Переживания в деятельности и психологические ресурсы студентов

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Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Рассматривая переживания в деятельности, авторы опираются в своем исследовании на теорию самодетерминации, где остается открытым вопрос о связи переживаний в деятельности с психологическими ресурсами. Цель. Выявить переживания в учебно-профессиональной деятельности и психологические ресурсы v студентов. **Гипотеза**. У студентов, чей профиль типичных переживаний в процессе учебно-профессиональной деятельности близок к оптимальному, выше уровень самоконтроля, сочувствия к себе и ниже показатели эмоционального выгорания. Методы и материалы. В исследовании приняли участие 165 студентов вузов в возрасте от 18 до 22 лет (M = 19,1, SD = 0,96). Использовались следующие методики: «Диагностика переживаний в профессиональной деятельности» (Е.Н. Осин, Д.А. Леонтьев), «Сочувствие к себе» (К. Нефф, в адаптации К.А. Чистопольской, Е.Н. Осина и др.), «Краткая шкала самоконтроля» (Т.О. Гордеева, Е.Н. Осин), «Опросник эмоционального выгорания» (К. Маслач. С. Джексон, в адаптации Н.Е. Водопьяновой). Результаты. Результаты показали, что составляющие оптимального переживания (удовольствие, смысл) положительно связаны с сочувственным отношением к себе и самоконтролем, тогда как переживание пустоты в деятельности связано с эмоциональным выгоранием и негативным отношением к себе, особенно в ситуации неудач. Выявлено, что у студентов, чей профиль типичных переживаний в процессе учебно-профессиональной деятельности близок к оптимальному, более выражена способность управлять своим поведением, эмоциями и высокий эмоциональный тонус. Выводы. Показано, что изучение переживаний студентов и их психологических ресурсов является перспективным. Полученные результаты ставят перед высшим образованием задачу поиска индивидуальных траекторий профессионального становления студентов.

Ключевые слова: личность, переживания в деятельности, психологическое благополучие, удовлетворенность жизнью, сочувствие к себе, самоконтроль, психологические ресурсы, переживание

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Introduction

The issues of young people connected with professional growth in the period of getting higher education are being considered through the prism of psychological health more often, as well as through the prism of well-being and experiences in activity. There are several reasons for this cross-over of the two research object fields. In the strategies of self-realization, including the professional sphere, one may find predictors of emotional states and psychological well-being, such as autonomous self-motivation (Gordeeva, Sychev, 2021), metacognitive engagement (Denisova et al., 2022), focus on self-realization (Kabrin et al., 2022). Emotional experiences are assessed as markers of internal motivation for the activity, ensuring a high level of its productivity (Dyachuk, Bocharova, 2021; Kazakova, Koshel, 2022; Klein et al., 2019; Mitina, Isakova, 2022; Finkelstein-Fox et al., 2020).

The construct of "experience in activity" introduced into scientific vocabulary by D.A. Leontiev provides an opportunity not only to study the features of students' experiences during their university years, but also to study the connection of these experiences with psychological resources, including those of students majoring in psychology and pedagogics as future specialists whose activities are related to the "human-human" interaction system.

D.A. Leontiev, when designing and operationalizing a three-dimensional combinatorial model of experience in activity, seeks to capture the concept of "optimal experience" introduced into the scientific worldview by M. Csikszentmihalyi (Osin, Leontiev, 2017; Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). The author identifies the criteria for optimal experiences: optimality as effectiveness (the sum of experiences ensures its objective result), optimality as a

positive emotional balance (involvement in an activity and its implementation are associated with the experience of pleasure), optimality as meaningfulness (the activity is understood in the broader context of one's own life). The author considers the experience in activity as a "subjective representation of correlation of the current activity with each of the three criteria" (Osin, Leontiev, 2017, p. 32). In the model context, the optimal experience includes a range of positive emotions (pleasure), and the meaningfulness of one's activity (inclusion in the meaningful contexts of one's own life), and some effort leading to the achievement of the goal facing the subject, while the experience of emptiness marks the absence of control and inability to comprehend life events. It is proposed to consider the optimal experience as a "mental compass" that guides psychological selection, supporting the development trajectory that each person independently builds and follows throughout life (Aleksandrova, 2022, p. 155).

For the current moment, the features of the optimal experience have been studied in various types of activities. Thus, studies have revealed that: participants in a cooperative board game experience significantly more pleasure and meaningfulness and less emptiness than participants in games with competitive actions (Mitina, Isakova, 2022); full-time students rate the experience of pleasure, meaning, and effort higher than students studying in a distance learning format (Kazakova, Koshel, 2022); in the context of a significant proportion of classes in remote format, including some limitations in movement, students experience a decrease in the intensity of complex experiences of joy and flow (Dyachuk, Bocharova, 2021).

Analyzing student engagement as an actual state that can be described through

absorption in an activity, close to the "flow state", researchers prove that the majority of highly engaged students perceive their lives as quite meaningful, life events as being under their control. They also perceive themselves as autonomous, have a high positive esteem of themselves, of their own professional and personal qualities, and are characterized by a significant experience of life satisfaction (Pavlova, Krasnoryadtseva, Scheglova, 2021).

Studies of optimal experience in various types of activities have shown that it is associated with such psychological resources as motivation and responsibility (Kazakova, Koshel, 2022; Klein et al., 2019; Krasnoryadtseva, Vaulina, Tolmacheva, 2023), a complex experience of joy as a combination of experiences of pleasure and meaning is associated with productive coping strategies (reflexive coping, proactive coping, etc.) (Dyachuk, Bocharova, 2021). Studies note a connection between optimal experience and psychological well-being (Klein et al., 2019; Leontiev et al., 2018; Osin, Leontiev, 2017). The absence of optimal experience is associated with such indicators of psychological distress as negative effect and emotional distress (Osin, Leontiev, 2017).

At the same time, the question of the relationship between experiences in educational and professional activities and other psychological resources of students remains open, which determines the purpose of the work. Following D. Leontiev, we define resources as means, the abundance and sufficiency of which contribute to the sustainability of wellbeing, goal achievement and high performance results (Leontiev, 2023). Psychological resources include personality and character traits, abilities, mental processes. D. Leontiev identifies five groups of psychological resources: motivational, instrumental, as well

as resources of sustainability, self-regulation and transformation (Leontiev, 2023). The resources provide a person with more opportunities to resist negative development factors and unfavorable living conditions.

The psychological resources considered by the authors of the current article are selfcontrol, self-compassion, emotional tone.

Self-control. Self-control as a regulatory personality trait plays an important role in educational and professional activities (Nevryuev, Sychev, Sarieva, 2022), acts as a predictor of academic performance at all stages of education (Gordeeva et al., 2016; Nevryuev, Sychev, Sarieva, 2022), shows an inverse correlation with a tendency to boredom (Dorosheva, Golubev, 2023) and burnout in students (Nevryuev, Sychev, Sarieva, 2022; Trofimova, Efanova, 2022), which may indicate its important role in preventing burnout and analyzing its role in students' experiences.

Self-compassion. Research shows that a compassionate attitude towards oneself and acts of kindness can potentially have a positive impact on subjective well-being by maintaining motivation for the chosen activity (Chistopolskaya et al., 2020; Leybina, Kashapov, 2022).

Emotional Tone. Emotional tone is expressed in the predominance of positive emotions and productive activity of the individual, in being ready to respond to emerging difficulties and seek resources for overcoming them. Emotional tone is considered in the continuum "high — low". In our opinion, one of the markers of low emotional tone can be emotional burnout, which occurs as a consequence of psychological difficulties in educational and professional activities, such as: establishing a balance between self-development, which requires intensive investment of effort in professional growth, and self-preservation, which

requires careful use of vital and personal energy; mismatch between the individual idea of obtaining the professional qualification and the training program; search for an individual strategy for completing educational and professional tasks: multitasking of the age stage (training, finding a partner, establishing friendly relations, professional employment) and limited time resources, etc. The arising difficulties can hinder self-development due to difficulties in understanding the changes taking place (Krasnoryadtseva, 2001) and insufficient experience in overcoming unfavorable emotional states (Krasnoryadtseva, Vaulina, Tolmacheva, 2023; Kroencke et al., 2019: Finkelstein-Fox et al., 2020). Emotional burnout comes in the form of disturbances in the emotional personality functioning (decreased emotional response, subjective evaluation of increased efforts when performing activities, symptoms of isolation from others, dehumanization of the relationship sphere).

The conducted scientific and theoretical review allowed us to assume that students whose profile of typical experiences in the process of educational and professional activity is close to optimal have a higher level of self-control, self-compassion and lower rates of emotional burnout. In this regard, the purpose of the research is to identify experiences in educational and professional activity of students, as well as their psychological resources.

According to the work purpose, the following tasks were to be solved:

- 1) organizing and conducting a psychodiagnostic study of students in the psychological and psychology-pedagogical departments.
- analyzing the correlations between the components of experiences in educational and professional activity and the psychological resources of respondents.

 identifying differences in psychological resources of students with different experience profiles in educational and professional activity.

Methods and Materials

The results of the theoretical analysis were used as a basis for organizing and conducting an empirical study. For this purpose, a set of psycho-diagnostic methods was used to determine the experiences in the educational and professional activities of students and their psychological resources: self-control, self-compassion, emotional tone.

Methods. To study experiences in educational and professional activities, the method of "Diagnostics of Experiences in Professional Activities" has been used (Osin, Leontiev, 2017), which allows to consider the optimal experience through a combination of such scales as "pleasure", "effort" and "meaning of activity", while deviation from the optimal experience is marked by a combination of experiencing emptiness, excessive effort and a decrease in pleasure and meaning of activity. We expanded the instruction: "Here are the statements that describe your feelings in the process of work. Work should be understood as learning and applying the acquired knowledge in practical activities. Please rate how often you go through these experiences using a scale from 1 to 6."

Self-compassion was studied using the "Self-Compassion" method (K. Neff, adapted by K.A. Chistopolskaya, E.N. Osin, and others), which focuses on a benevolent attitude towards oneself, self-acceptance in failures, and careful study of one's feelings without excessively identifying with them. The method includes six subscales: "Kindness towards oneself", "Community with humanity", "Attentiveness", "Self-criticism", "Self-isolation", "Excessive Identity" (Chistopolskaya et al., 2020).

Since emotional burnout serves as a marker of low emotional tone, the "Emotional Burnout Questionnaire" (K. Maslach, S. Jackson, adapted by N.E. Vodopyanova) was used for its diagnostics. It is aimed at studying the symptoms of emotional, mental exhaustion, physical fatigue, personal detachment and decreased satisfaction with the activity performance (Fetiskin, Kozlov, Manuilov, 2002). The questionnaire has a general scale "Mental Burnout" and three subscales: "Psychoemotional Exhaustion", "Depersonalization" and "Reduction of Personal Achievements".

Self-control was studied using the "Brief Self-Control Scale" (Gordeeva et al., 2016). Self-control reflects individual abilities to manage one's behavior, emotions, thoughtfully respond to current events, and act in accordance with the long-term goals that students face.

Sample. The study involved 165 students from Barnaul universities studying in the psychological and psychology-pedagogical departments. The sample included 33,94% of young men and 66,06% of young women aged 18 to 22 years (M = 19,1, SD = 0,96). By years: 1st year students — 27,29%, 2nd year students — 61,81%, 3rd year students — 10,9%.

Data analysis methods. Methods used for the obtained data analysis: correlation analysis using the Pearson coefficient, Student's T-test for independent samples and hierarchical cluster analysis (the "centroid classification" method). The research results were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22,0 software products.

Results

To test the assumption about the connection between the components of experiences in educational and professional activities and the psychological resources of students, we

conducted a correlation analysis using the Pearson coefficient, the data of which are presented in Table 1.

The results of the correlation analysis demonstrate significant correlations between the scales of the "Diagnostics of Experiences in Professional Activities" method, the "Brief Self-Control Scale" method, the scales of the "Self-Compassion" method, and the scales of the "Emotional Burnout Questionnaire" method. According to the scales "Pleasure" and "Sense", inverse negative relations (p < 0,01) were found with the scales "Psychoemotional exhaustion" (r = -0.442; r = -0.428, respectively), "Depersonalization" (r = -0.214; r = -0.238), "Reduction of personal achievements" (r = -0.627; r = -0.652), "Mental burnout" (r = -0.544: r = -0.552) and direct positive relations (p < 0.01) with the scale "Self-control" (r = 0.381; r = 0.378), scales "Attention" (r = 0.350; r = 0.335), "Self-compassion" (r = 0.259; r = 0.222). The "Effort" scale revealed direct positive relationships with the "Psychoemotional exhaustion" scale (r = 0.220; p < 0.01) and the "Community" with humanity" scale (r = 0.184; p < 0.05). The Emptiness scale has positive correlations (p < 0.01) with the burnout questionnaire scales: Psychoemotional exhaustion (r = 0.383), Depersonalization (r = 0.245), Reduction of personal achievements (r = 0.483), Mental burnout (r = 0,467) and negative correlations with the Self-control scale (r = -0.320; p < 0,01) and the Self-compassion method scales (p < 0,05): Self-isolation (r = -0,186), Attention (r = -0.191), Self-compassion (r = -0,154).

The next stage of data analysis was testing the hypothesis that students with different experiences in their activities may have different psychological resources. The multidimensional nature of the phenomenon of experience in activity becomes the basis for turning

Table 1 Correlation links of experiences in professional activity with psychological resources of students (N = 165)

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Note: ** — correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (two-sided); * — correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (two-sided). 1 — Psychoemotional exhaustion; 2 — Depersonalization; 3 — Reduction of personal achievements; 4 — Mental burnout; 5 — Self-control; 6 — Kindness; 7 — Self-criticism; 8 — Community with humanity; 9 — Self-isolation; 10 — Attention; 11 — Excessive identity; 12 — Self-compassion; 13 — Pleasure; 14 — Sense; 15 — Effort; 16 — Emptiness. to hierarchical cluster analysis, which allows dividing students into relatively homogeneous groups based on experiences in activity: pleasure, effort, sense, emptiness. To divide the sample into groups, we used hierarchical clustering with the "centroid classification" method, interval measure: squared Euclidean distance. The scaled data, which serve as the basis for clustering, were standardized into z-scores. In the course of the analysis, two cluster structures were considered: a structure consisting of three clusters (35,8%; 48.5%; 15,8% of respondents in each cluster), and a structure of two clusters (51,5%; 48,5% of respondents in each cluster). For further analysis, a structure consisting of two clusters was selected, since one cluster out of three may be completely included in one of the two. Thus, as a result of the hierarchical cluster analysis, two final clusters were obtained. Comparison of the average values for the analyzed scales between the clusters indicates the reliability of their differences, which allowed us to divide the sample into two groups.

The first cluster is formed by respondents (51,5%) with high and average values for the scales "Pleasure", "Sense", "Effort", which reflect the proximity of their typical experiences in educational and professional activities profile to the optimal one. The second cluster is represented by 49,5% of students with high and average values for the scales "Emptiness", "Effort" and low or average values for the scales "Pleasure", "Sense", which reflects the discrepancy between their typical experiences and optimal experience profile. The first group (group 1), which includes students of the first cluster, will be further designated as "Students with pronounced optimal experience", the second group (group 2), which was made up of students of the second cluster, — "Students with non-pronounced optimal experience in activity".

The data from the parametric Student's T-test allowed us to identify reliable differences in the study groups, which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Statistical characteristics of comparative analysis of psychological resources
of different groups of students (Student's T-criterion) (N = 165)

Psychological resources	Groups	N	M	SD	t	р	Cohen's d
Psychoemotional exhaustion	1	85	15,529	10,119	-5,311	< 0,001	-0,827
	2	80	23,913	10,150			
Depersonalization	1	85	8,541	6,062	-2,941	0,004	0,458
	2	80	11,188	5,454			
Reduction of personal achievements	1	85	11,435	5,225	-8,056	< 0,001	-1,255
	2	80	19,113	6,943			
Mental burnout	1	85	35,506	16,593	-6,990	< 0,001	-1,089
	2	80	54,212	17,783			
Self-control	1	85	44,859	7,448	3,802	< 0,001	0,592
	2	80	40,538	7,132			
Kindness	1	85	3,186	0,780	0,421	0,674	0,066
	2	80	3,135	0,772]		
Self-criticism	1	85	3,247	0,851	0,654	0,514	0,102
	2	80	3,160	0,860]		

Psychological resources	Groups	N	M	SD	t	р	Cohen's d
Community with humanity	1	85	3,150	0,858	0,296	0,768	0,046
	2	80	3,112	0,766			
Self-isolation	1	85	3,676	1,004	1,762	0,080	0,274
	2	80	3,406	0,963			
Attention	1	85	3,615	0,736	2,492	0,014	0,388
	2	80	3,353	0,602]		
Excessive identity	1	85	3,650	1,038	1,464	0,145	0,228
	2	80	3,428	0,898			
Self-compassion	1	85	3,405	0,429	2,190	0,030	0,341
	2	80	3,257	0,436			

Note: Cohen's d index was used to assess the effect size and the degree of differences between the studied indicators.

Based on the data presented in Table 2, it can be concluded that the students of the first group have less pronounced values on all scales of the "Emotional Burnout Questionnaire" method. At the same time, the size of the statistical effect, estimated using the d-Cohen index, is high (d \leq 0,80) on the scales of "Psycho-emotional exhaustion", "Reduction of personal achievements", "Mental burnout", and on the scale of "Depersonalization" it is average. Also, the average effect size (d \leq 0,50) was revealed on the scale of "Self-control", which allows us to dwell on a more pronounced ability in the respondents of the first group to manage their emotions and behavior. Even though the T-test shows reliable differences on the scales "Attention" and "Self-compassion", the power of the d-Cohen criterion is low (≤ 0,20), which does not give grounds to speak about significant differences between the groups of sample subjects on these scales and rather indicates the random nature of the differences obtained.

Debate on the results

Our study was aimed at identifying the relationship of experiences in educational and professional activities with psychological resources in students. The results obtained in it complement other data on the relationship between the components of optimal experience and personality traits (Gordeeva et al., 2016; Denisova et al., 2022; Mitina, Isakova, 2022).

The results of the correlation analysis confirmed the relationship of experiences in educational and professional activities with such psychological resources of students as self-control, compassionate attitude towards themselves and emotional tone. As the experiences of pleasure and meaningfulness in educational and professional activities increase, the compassionate attitude of students towards themselves, attention to the experiences of the self increase as well. Along with the mentioned above, the ability to manage students' behavior and emotions, the value of their activities, interest in them, a sense of competence, and positive selfperception in the activity also increase.

High intensity of students' experiences regarding the efforts spent on achieving the results of their educational and professional activities is associated with emotional and physical fatigue, indifference to others and identification with other people experiencing the same failures. Students associate the experience of emptiness as a feeling of being in

spontaneous uncontrolled processes of educational and professional activities with the severity of their emotional burnout, isolation from the educational space, self-isolation and negative attitude towards themselves, as well as low self-control.

The study found that pleasure and sense as components of optimal experience are positively associated with a compassionate attitude towards oneself, self-control and high emotional tone, and effort (another component of optimal experience in activity) is associated with a positive attitude towards oneself in a situation of overcoming life's difficulties through identification with other people in a similar situation. The positive relationship between effort and psychoemotional exhaustion once again confirms that excessive efforts, especially without meaningfulness of the activity and pleasure from it, lead to emotional exhaustion. Similar data are presented in the study by E.N. Osin and D.A. Leontiev (Osin, Leontiev, 2017). The experience of emptiness in educational and professional activities is associated with emotional burnout (a feeling of incompetence in one's work, decreased professional and personal self-esteem, emotional exhaustion) and a negative attitude towards oneself, especially in a situation of failure.

Students whose profile of typical experiences in the process of educational and professional activity is close to optimal (group 1) have the ability to manage their behavior, emotions and the prevalence of high emotional tone. Students of the first group are

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characterized by a positive assessment of the results of their work and opportunities for professional development, as well as higher satisfaction with the result of the activity.

Conclusion

The conducted study shows that the components of optimal experience (pleasure and meaning) demonstrate positive relationships with self-control, indicators of self-compassion and negative relationships with indicators of emotional burnout. Excessive effort without satisfaction and meaningfulness of activity leads to psycho-emotional exhaustion. It was revealed that self-control and high emotional tone are more typical for students with optimal experience in educational and professional activity, while differences in self-compassion between empirical groups were not established.

The results obtained set the task for higher education — to search for individual trajectories of students' professional development through various forms: participation in trainings on self-knowledge, self-efficacy, goalsetting, meaningfulness, as well as participation in various projects (scientific, practical).

Limitations. The limitations of the study are related to the small sample size, which is a prospect for the study (increasing the sample size and expanding the research base). The possibility of extending the findings to a larger category of students is limited by the fact that the study was conducted on a sample of students studying in psychological and psychological-pedagogical fields of study.

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Yu.V. Trofimova — research ideas, annotation, writing and formatting the manuscript; research planning; data collection and analysis; application of statistical, mathematical or other methods for data analysis; research supervision.

M.I. Efanova — data collection and analysis; creation of the database; application of statistical, mathematical or other methods for data analysis; writing and formatting the manuscript; visualization of research results.

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