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**AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONTENT OF THE
CONCEPT "THE VALUE OF OWN LIFE" (BASED ON THE
RESULTS OF A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC EXPERIMENT)**

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Relevance of the research. A sense of the value of one's own life and the peculiarities of its experience not sufficiently studied in domestic psychology. Understanding how this feeling arises and strengthens is necessary for the development of new technologies for psychological counselling and assistance to people facing various life problems.

The aim of the study is to analyze the universal and unique features of the verbal behavior of subjects of different ages and sex in relation to the phenomenon of the value of their own life.

Research methods. The subjects participated in a free associative experiment - writing five words that come to mind in connection with the phrase "The value of one's own life." Sample - 232 subjects (87 men and 145 women). The group of late adolescence consisted of 65 subjects aged 16 to 21 years. There were 81 subjects in the group of young people (22-30 years old). The mature group (61 people) was in the age range from 31 to 59 years. In the group of late maturity - 25 subjects.

Results. Variants of semantic systems were identified, which are verbalizing in associations and involved in determining the direction of experiencing a sense of value of their own life among men and women, early age, young, mature and advanced age. These options broadly correspond to the six main sources of the value of one's own life.

Conclusions. The value of one's own life is the willingness to experience the struggle for survival. This is the ability to deploy "techniques of being" when the subject responds to certain challenges of life. The identified male associates in the associative experiment have an external

orientation and accentuate the idea of space / time. Women's associates are connected with the inner world, connected with personal and psycho-regulatory qualities. The types of age-related dynamics of associates were identified: "transversal", "increasing", "decreasing", "bulging".

Keywords: *the value of one's own life, experiencing a sense of value of one's own life; associates; associative field of the concept "the value of one's own life"; semantic systems; type of age dynamics of associates.*

Емпіричний аналіз змісту поняття «цінність власного життя» (за результатами психолінгвістичного експерименту)

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Актуальність дослідження. *Почуття цінності власного життя і особливості його переживання у вітчизняній психології вивчені недостатньо. Розуміння того, як виникає і зміцнюється це почуття, необхідно для розвитку нових технологій психологічного консультування та допомоги людям, які зіткнулися з різними життєвими проблемами. Метою дослідження є аналіз універсальних і унікальних особливостей вербальної поведінки досліджуваних різного віку і статі щодо феномену цінності власного життя.*

Метод і вибірка дослідження. *Досліджувані брали участь у вільному асоціативному експерименті - написанні п'яти слів, які приходять на розум у зв'язку зі словосполученням «Цінність власного життя». Вибірка - 232 випробовуваних (87 чоловіків і 145 жінок). До групи пізньої юності увійшли 65 осіб у віці від 16 до 21 років. У групі молодих (22 - 30 років) була 81 особа. Група зрілих - 61 особа, перебувала в віковому діапазоні від 31 до 59 років. У групі пізньої зрілості - 25 осіб.*

Результати. *Виявлено варіанти смислових систем, які вербалізуються в асоціаціях і беруть участь у визначенні спрямованості переживання почуття цінності власного життя у чоловіків і жінок, у випробовуваних юного, молодого, зрілого та похилого віку. Ці варіанти в цілому відповідають шести основних джерел почуття цінності власного життя.*

Висновки. Цінність власного життя - це готовність до переживання досвіду боротьби за виживання. Це - здатність до розгортання «технік буття» при відгуку суб'єкта на ті, чи інші виклики життя. Виявлені в асоціативному експерименті асоціати чоловіків мають зовнішню спрямованість і акцентують ідею простору / часу. Жіночі асоціати пов'язані з внутрішнім світом, пов'язані з особистісними і психорегулятивними якостями. Виявлено типи вікової динаміки асоціатів: «наскрізний», «зростаючий», «регресний», «випираючий».

Ключові слова: цінність власного життя, переживання почуття цінності власного життя; асоціати; асоціативне поле поняття «цінність власного життя»; смислові системи; тип вікової динаміки асоціатів.

Introduction. An important line of personality formation is the development of a sense of the value of one's own life (Self-Worth Value, further SWV). SWV is a holistic, multilevel, multidimensional and systemic education. It allows you to answer the life challenges, to find meaning in them.

SWV is multicomponent. It includes many individual values related to separate aspects of human life. Nevertheless, SWV is relevant to a person's entire life as a whole. This is an intentional, directed activity of an active nature, a kind of axiological action that can have both exteriorized and fully interiorized form. The purpose of such an action is to strengthen and assert one's own beingness. The cognitive basis of SWV feelings is a person's judgments about its life as a whole (about its quality, content-richness, dynamics, direction, fulfillment and meaning).

The ability to experience the feeling of SWV is one of the neoplasms of youthful age, since it is based on worldview constructs that clearly form precisely in youth. However, the sense of SWV is transformed throughout ontogenesis and is conditioned by one or another life task. Partially, SWV develops spontaneously, as a product of vital vitality, as a consequence of the individual's daily functioning. However, for the most part, the SWV feeling is a product of the individual's conscious activity, the result of its mastering the "techniques of being", the acquisition of cultural and historical experience within the framework of society. The experience of SWV

is more mature among people which have managed to develop a concept of their own life, have experience in its analysis, revision, and correction. Specific internal activity to develop and revise the concept of one's life is a daily necessity for an adult. Ontogenetically, the beginning of this activity is rooted in adolescence and younger age. The main stimulus for the formation of SWV is the experience of fighting for one's life (the experience of survival).

The results of the study, reflected in this article, are part of a multi-stage empirical study, in which the structure, functions, age and sex characteristics, the possibilities of psychodiagnostics, as well as predictors of the feeling of SWV of people, and, first of all, of student youth, were revealed. Young people face a variety of life challenges, from the difficulties of everyday life (in school, in the family, at work) to life in conditions of poverty, social insecurity, forced migration, hostilities, diseases, loss of relatives and friends, etc. Knowledge of psychological patterns, in accordance with which the feeling of SWV is formed and strengthened, can form the basis of effective psychological assistance to people experiencing various life difficulties and trials.

The aim of the study is to identify universal and unique features of the verbal behavior of subjects of different ages and sex with respect to the SWV phenomenon using a psycholinguistic experiment. In the process of achieving this goal, two tasks were solved.

Firstly, the sources of SWV feelings were identified, i.e. those systems of meanings that actualize this experience in a person and are easily manifested in everyday speech. Since feeling (as opposed to emotion, mood, emotional tone, affect) is characterized by awareness and objectivity (Breslav, 2004; Dodonov, 1978; Ilyin, 2001; Kuznetsov, 2005; Leontiev, 1971), it is easily verbalized. Our subjects without any particular difficulty could verbally identify objects, phenomena, actions, properties, etc., with which their sense of SWV is associated in their minds. Almost everyone (with rare exceptions) adequately understood the essence of the instructions for the associative experiment: write 5 words that come to mind in connection with the phrase "The value of your own life."

Secondly, the concept of the structure of SWV feeling was developed. The systems of meanings that actualize the experience of SWV feelings, as a rule, have certain thematic directions. They can be interpreted as “structural components” of SWV feeling. These orientations in each specific test subject can be developed in consciousness with varying degrees of completeness and are represented by a different number of associates. Therefore, a free associative experiment was carried out to accumulate material, on the basis of which the formulations of the items of our questionnaire "The value of students' own lives" were then developed.

Sample and research methodology.

The phrase “The value of one's own life” was used as a stimulus. We studied a sample of 232 subjects - 87 men and 145 women who agreed to fill in anonymously online the items of the corresponding Google form. The group of late adolescence consisted of 65 subjects aged 16 to 21 years. There were 81 subjects in the group of young people (22-30 years old). The mature group (61 people) was in the age range from 31 to 59 years. The group of late maturity was the smallest - 25 subjects. All participants are people with higher or secondary specialized education (lawyers, psychologists, university teachers, teachers, sports coaches, doctors, economists, entrepreneurs, officers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, engineers, sales consultants, accountants, pensioners, students, etc. from different regions of Ukraine).

The psycholinguistic experiment was carried out according to the algorithm proposed by I.A. Sternin and A.V. Rudakova (2011).

Results.

The subjects gave 954 reactions to the stimulus phrase “The value of their own life” (results for five reactions), reactions with a frequency of more than 1 - 120, single ones - 15, refusals - 0. All received reactions were assigned to 231 categories. They were subjected to semantic interpretation, as a result of which the same-root associates were generalized, as well as the nominations of one semantic component with words of different parts of speech. At the same time, their frequency was summed up, and the number of categories was reduced to 136.

Based on the results of a free associative experiment, an associative field of the stimulus "The value of one's own life" (according to the first reaction) was built, where all reactions are presented in decreasing order of frequency. A fragment of the associative field is given in Table 1.

Table 1

The associative field of the stimulus "The value of one's own life" (according to the first reaction) in the entire sample of subjects (n = 232)

<i>N_o</i>	Associates	Frequency of reactions (%)
1	Health	27 (19,85%)
2	Family	24 (17,65%)
3	Love	12 (8,82%)
4	Value	9 (6,62%)
5	Life	8 (5,88%)
6	Development	7 (5,15%)
7	Love for loved ones	6 (4,41%)
8	Love for yourself	6 (4,41%)
9	Knowledge	6 (4,41%)
10	Self esteem	6 (4,41%)
11	Safety	4 (2,94%)
12	Caring for people	4 (2,94%)
13	Love of life	4 (2,94%)
14	Responsibility	4 (2,94%)
15	Freedom	4 (2,94%)
16	Insurance	4 (2,94%)
17	Happiness	4 (2,94%)
18	Purpose in life	4 (2,94%)
19	Inner harmony	3 (2,21%)
20	Kindness	3 (2,21%)
21	Security	3 (2,21%)
22	Significance	3 (2,21%)
23	Favorite work	3 (2,21%)
24	Dream	3 (2,21%)
25	Mindfulness	3 (2,21%)
26	Priorities	3 (2,21%)
27	Respect	3 (2,21%)

It gives reactions with a frequency equal to or greater than 2%. These data reflect the universal features of the verbal behavior of the subjects regarding the SWV phenomenon. The accepted frequency criterion corresponded to 27 associations, which can be conditionally grouped into 5 semantic clusters.

A - "**Life in health conditions**" (health, life, love of life, happiness, inner harmony),

B - "**Family, love, relationships with people**" (family, love, love for loved ones, caring for people, kindness, respect),

C - "**Values and preferences**" (value, significance, favorite work, priorities),

D - "**Attitude towards oneself**" (self-love, self-respect),

E - "**Cognition, development, purposefulness and self-regulation**" (development, cognition, responsibility, freedom, purpose in life, dream, awareness),

F - "**Self-defense**" (safety, insurance, security). The first five associates represent the concepts included in clusters A, B and C.

The first five associates represent the concepts included in clusters A, B and C. The most frequent reaction was health (27; 19,85%). This result is quite natural: the possession of health means not so much the absence of any diseases and physical defects, as the presence of a person's complete mental, physical and social well-being. In a healthy person, vital activity is optimal, the feeling and the very living of life as such is distinguished by completeness and harmony. The social activity of a healthy person is effective, multifaceted, and long-term. The components of health reflect the fact of human existence simultaneously in several "dimensions" - biological, social, informational, spiritual and semantic. The psychological mechanisms of maintaining health, being the "techniques of being" of the individual, are, in fact, the basis for experiencing the feeling of SWV. M.A. Kuznetsov and L.N. Zotova include: 1) survival, 2) stability, 3) harmony, 4) subjective well-being, 5) self-care, 6) flow, 7) psychological defenses, 8) coping behavior, 9) adaptive-personal and intellectual personal potential, 10) resources, 10) seeking social support, 11) attributive style, 12) certain personal

qualities (sense of self-worth, perception of one's own effectiveness, standards for assessing one's own behavior, metacognitive knowledge of self-control strategies, etc.) and, finally, an internal picture of health. (Kuznetsov & Zotova, 2017).

The reactions of family (24; 17,65%) and love (12; 8,82%) were among the most frequent for a reason. It is the family system, the atmosphere of love and affection in it that sets general guidelines and develops regulatory standards for communication with people both in the micro- and in the macrosociety. In turn, rational conclusions about one's own life and a general emotional-value attitude towards it depend on the effectiveness of such communication (Vinnikot D.V., 2016).

Relatively often manifested in the associative experiment, the reactions of value (9; 6,62%) and life (8; 5,88%) indicate the presence of a healthy life-affirming tendency in the personality of our subjects. Its essence is deeply and meaningfully revealed within the framework of existential psychological research. E. Fromm called this tendency biophilic (as opposed to necrophilic) (Fromm, 1994). In accordance with E. Fromm's concept of biophilia, love for the living as an existential need of the subject extends not only to the surrounding natural and social world, but also to himself. In this capacity, biophilia forms the basis of a person's SWV feeling. When a person is in extreme, extreme, death-threatening circumstances, this tendency can take the form of an internal imperative: "Say "Yes!" to life" (Frankl V., 2007). It is this tendency that finds its expression in the unconditional predominance of the motivation of "being" over the motivation of "having" (Maslow, 1997). It also manifests itself in the Person's striving to "break through" to Being through "spiritual vision", recognition in the world of what is in tune with her, through Meeting the challenges of life (Langle, 2019). It is a person's readiness to be active, interested, open, able to overcome his indifference (Battiani, 2020).

Table 2 reflects the associative field of the stimulus "The value of one's own life" (according to the first reaction) in men who participated in the psycholinguistic experiment. The semantic field of female associations (according to the first reaction) is presented in Table 3.

Table 2

The associative field of the stimulus "The value of one's own life"(according to the first reaction) in a sample of men (n = 87)

№№	Associates	Frequency of reactions (%)
1	Family	12 (13,79)
2	Health	6 (6,9)
3	Development	6 (6,9)
4	Love for loved ones	4 (4,6)
5	Caring for people	3 (3,45)
6	Knowledge	3 (3,45)
7	Insurance	3 (3,45)
8	Security	2 (2,3)
9	Favorite work	2 (2,3)
10	Heritage	2 (2,3)
11	Independence	2 (2,3)
12	Priorities	2 (2,3)
13	Travels	2 (2,3)
14	Self-worth	2 (2,3)
15	Freedom	2 (2,3)
16	Happiness	2 (2,3)
17	Respect	2 (2,3)
18	Pleasure	2 (2,3)
19	Purpose in life	2 (2,3)

The following sex differences were found in the associative field structure. Firstly, in spite of the fact that there are more female subjects than males, the number of associates who crossed the 2% probability limit among men is greater (19) than among women (13 in total). Secondly, both men and women generated associations that belonged to the category of *love*. However, men meant love for loved ones but women, apparently, erotic love. Thirdly, in the reactions of women more fully than among men, topic A is presented - "Life in health conditions". Associates of *health* (21; 15,44%), *life* (7; 5,15%),

love of life (3; 2,21%) turned out to be high-frequency for them. Among men, this semantic system is represented only by the *health* associate (6; 6,9%). Fourthly, men have more extensive than women a part of the associative field that corresponds to topic B - "Family, love, relationships with people." It is represented by five associates among men and only two among women. At first glance, this result seems paradoxical. However, a meaningful analysis reveals that among men, in associative reactions, *care for people*, *respect* for them, and *love for loved ones* are noted. Such associates speak of the responsibility for loved ones that a man (in full accordance with the traditional gender role) takes on.

Table 3

The associative field of the stimulus "The value of one's own life" (according to the first reaction) in a sample of women (n = 145)

№№	Associates	Frequency of reactions (%)
1	Health	21 (15,44)
2	Family	12 (8,82)
3	Love	11 (8,09)
4	Value	8 (5,88)
5	Life	7 (5,15)
6	Love for yourself	6 (4,41)
7	Safety	4 (2,94)
8	Self-worth	4 (2,94)
9	Significance	3 (2,21)
10	Love of life	3 (2,21)
11	Mindfulness	3 (2,21)
12	Responsibility	3 (2,21)
13	Knowledge	3 (2,21)

Fifth, when the number of associates is equal to one or another topic, they turned out to be different in their content. So, subject C - "Values and preferences" for men are represented by associates, denoting values projected onto the outside world. This is your *favorite job* (2; 2,3%) and *priorities* (2; 2,3%). Associates of women turned

out to be connected with the inner world - *value* (8; 5,88%), *significance* (3; 2,21%). Within the framework of subject E - "Cognition, development, purposefulness and self-regulation", the presence of spatio-temporal categories is noticeable among men's answers. The future is reflected in the *purpose in life* associate (2; 2,3%), the past is in the *heritage* associate (2; 2,3%), the movement from the past to the future is in the *development* associate (6; 6,9%), and the idea of spatial movement - in the *travel* associate (2; 2,3%). Female associates within the framework of this topic are associated with intrapersonal psycho-regulatory qualities - *awareness* (3; 2,21%), *responsibility* (3; 2,21%). This result is in good agreement with the typical result of testing boys and girls using the projective test of the World (World Test), which was reported by E. Erickson (1996: 149-162). From the blocks and toys offered to children, the boys mainly built the external world in it (houses, streets, towers, cars, etc.), and the girls mainly built the internal space (interior decoration of the house, apartments, protected entrances / exits, figurines of people and animals in rooms, etc.).

Sixth, the presence of existential associates in the associative field of men is also noteworthy: independence (2; 2,3%), freedom (2; 2,3%), happiness (2; 2,3%). They are also present in women's responses, but much less frequently (rather as specific, but not universal).

Results (for all reactions) of the associative experiment were obtained for four groups of subjects separated by age. When analyzing age differences, we relied on the periodization of human age development, traditional for domestic psychology (Ananiev, 2001; Tolstykh, 2000; Feldshtein, 1994). Due to significant differences in the quantitative composition of the groups identified by the age criterion, conclusions about age patterns and trends in the generation of associations were made not on the basis of an analysis of the first reactions, but on the basis of summary indicators of the frequency of all reactions.

We analyzed the age dynamics of all associates which overcame the 2% frequency barrier in at least one of the four groups of subjects. There were 64 of them.

The following variants of age-related dynamics of associations to the SWV stimulus were identified.

1 - "**Transversal**". In each group, regardless of age, there is invariably a high frequency of the following associations: "*health*", "*family*", "*favorite work*", "*love for loved ones*", "*well-being*." As a rule, these very concepts are located in the upper parts of the frequency lists of associates in all four groups of subjects. All ages are unanimous in their assessment of these fundamental SWV factors.

2 - "**Increasing**". Associates, the frequency of which steadily increases with age, include: "*respect*", "*peace*" (as the absence of war). It is older people who are more likely than others to experience SWV in situations where they are given dignified respect, corresponding to their merits to society. Interestingly, in the group of the youngest participants, this associate does not reach the 2% threshold at all. The lack of a peaceful life, the threat of war, apparently casts doubt on the feeling of SWV, especially among the elderly.

3 - "**Decreasing**". The frequencies of many associates decrease with age. A vivid confirmation of this is the associate "*love*" (erotic). Being the most high-frequency in adolescence (14; 10,29%), by old age it turns from universal to specific (1; 0,74%). And this is due not only to the loss of marriage partners, but also to the gradual desexualization of the life of the elderly. Associates "*happiness*", "*pleasure*", "*value*", "*communication*", "*purpose in life*", "*awareness*", "*avoidance of unpleasant people*", "*people*", "*travel*" undergo similar dynamics with age. Consequently, with age, people's judgments about the SWV and the experience of this feeling are less and less determined by hedonistic, motivational-target and communicative components of life.

4 - "**Bulging**". This version of the dynamic profile reflects some of the characteristics of a particular age group of subjects. It contains high frequency values of the associate in a certain group against the background of moderate or even low values in other groups. Associates are subject to this pattern:

- in the group of early adolescence - "*dream*", "*high self-esteem*", "*career growth*",

- in the youth group - *“self-love”, “significance”, “safety”, “self-knowledge”, “meaning”, “feelings”, “security”, “responsibility”, “time”, “knowledge”, “confidence”, “well-being”, “importance”, “achievements”, “moments”, “priorities”, “safety”, “love of life”, “self-expression”, “insurance”, “uniqueness”, “energy”;*
- in the group of mature people - *“children”, “the ability to enjoy life”, “self-realization”, “kindness”, “freedom”, “wisdom”, “search for purpose”, “future”, “spirituality”, “moral values”, “transcending”, “success”, “honesty”, “inner harmony”.*

Clear dynamic profiles of this form were obtained mainly from the subjects of the first three groups. Unfortunately, the group of elderly people who took part in our associative experiment was too small. However, even in such a group, it was possible to obtain the effect of a significant increase in the frequency of the associate *“friends”*. The restoration of old friendships and even the emergence of new friends (including younger ones) is often interpreted by gerontopsychologists as a sign of happy old age (Antsyferova, 2004; Shakhmatov, 1996), as a very adaptive strategy of gerontogenesis (Bixon, Perlo, Ruk & Goodchilds, 1989; Davydovsky, 1966), a manifestation of the ability of an elderly person to resist *“dissociation”* (Yermolaeva, 2002; Krasnova & Lidars, 2001).

The associates of the group of early adolescence clearly reflect the aspiration of the subjects to the future, concern with the problem of *“external expansion”*]. The verbal reactions of the youth group are in good agreement with the leading activities and the main life challenges of this life period (achieving identity and closeness, marriage, choosing a professional path, realizing their abilities). Associates to the concept of SWV in mature subjects inevitably bear the imprint of the existential aspects of the midlife crisis (lamination, a reversal of the temporal perspective towards the beginning of the *“decline of life”*, the first attempts to assess their life with a retrospective look, rethinking what has been achieved, searching for new meanings, gravitation towards new goals due to the fact that the first half of life is already close to completion, etc.). The associates of the elderly reflect their desire to preserve themselves both at the

individual (health) and personal (well-being of both micro- and macrosocial) levels.

Conclusions. SWV can be interpreted as the readiness to experience the struggle for survival and the ability to deploy "techniques of being" when the subject responds to certain challenges of life. In a psycholinguistic experiment, variants of semantic systems have been established that are easily verbalized in associations and participate in determining the direction of the experience of the SWV feeling. These options broadly correspond to the six main sources of SWV feeling. In male associations to the concept of SWV, the focus is on the external world, as well as space-time categories. Women's associates are more closely related to the inner world, as well as personal and psycho-regulatory qualities. The types of age-related dynamics of associates to the concept of SWV were revealed: "transversal" (the associate manifests itself in all age groups), "increasing" (the frequency of the associate's actualization increases with age), "decreasing" (the frequency of manifestation of the associate decreases with age), "bulging" (the associate it is maximally presented in the reactions of subjects of the middle age group and minimally in young and elderly subjects). In general, associations of representatives of different age groups to the concept of SWV reflect the specifics of social situations and developmental tasks, as well as the leading types of activity characteristic of a particular age.

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