

PERSONAL MORALITY AS DETERMINANT OF MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract: *The contribution presents sub-finding solutions to the grant project VEGA 1/0826/10. It offers describing of personal morality as determinant of mental health on the selected sample of 82 respondents. The results obtained from applying the Test of moral reasoning (MJT) demonstrate that the vast majority of individuals prefer postkonventional moral thinking. It is in terms of ability to resist social pressure and be independent from the assessment and the expectations of others – it is characterized by autonomous personal morality. This conclusion assumes that autonomy as a fundamental dimension of the structure of mental health will indicate a positive relationship with wellbeing.*

Key words: *personal morality, mental health, heteronomy, autonomy*

Theoretical background

The issue of mental health and optimal functioning of the personality (psychological well-being) is the actual subject of our and foreign psychological investigation (Džuka, 2004; Kebza, Solc, 2003; Diener et al., 1995; Diener, Suh, 2000; Snyder, Lopez, 2002). Equally in psychology we can pursue efforts are not focusing only on minimizing, eliminating or prevention of negative symptoms of mental well-being, but especially find factors promoting optimal psychological functioning. Positive aspects of human functioning are presented mainly positive psychology (Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder, Lopez, 2002; Křivohlavý, 2004). In addition to factors related to quality psychological functioning, positively influencing positive mental health such as life satisfaction (Křivohlavý, 2001), happiness (Seligman, 2002) and others, we can not ignore the personal morality of individuals. Especially if the health, together with Křivohlavý (2001) is regarded as the overall, physical, mental, social (including the moral) and spiritual state of man, which enables it to achieve optimal quality of life and not hinder efforts analogous to other people. It is significant that the bio-psycho-social model of health includes the moral, ethical dimension. Personal morality as a complex phenomenon of the human psyche is represented in the topics of positive psychology (Snyder, Lopez, 2002). A key concept that offers insight into the development of personal morality of individuals, it is well known Kohlberg's

theory (1969) of development of moral reasoning. It is based on the findings of Piaget (1932) for the interconnection of cognitive development and moral reasoning. Kohlberg's stages of moral development explain how it changes the way of thinking about moral issues in connection with the development of cognitive structures. Kohlberg investigated as people argue in dealing with hypothetical moral dilemmas and different ways to specific developmental moral reasoning considered universal levels of moral reasoning, development of personal morality. Differentiate three levels of personal morality – pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional in which distinguished the other two degrees further specifying the particular stage of development of moral reasoning.

Structures representing each plane of development of personal morality can be simplified in accordance with the author described as the concept of benefit, social contract and natural rights. Pre-conventional level represents autocentric phase in which the individual is dominant with his own needs. Conventional level sociocentrist stage – it describes the individual as a member of a particular group, respectively the group. In post-conventional level – universalistic stage – protrude interiorized beliefs and standards of the individual. Personal morality of autonomous type (post-conventional level of moral reasoning) in terms of ability to resist social pressure and be independent from the assessment and the expectations of others is autonomy as one of six basic dimensions structure the concept of wellbeing by Ryff and Keyes (1995). The other constituents of well-being are self-acceptance, positive relationship with others, managing the environment – environmental mastery, purpose in life (purpose in life), personal development (personal growth). We interested in the autonomy of personal morality pursued respondents in the first phase of our comprehensive research plan.

Method

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The aim of the study is to determine what type of personal morality prevails in this group of respondents. Our attention was focused on the preference degree of moral reasoning, which refers to the autonomous or heteronomous personal morality.

RESEARCH GROUP

82 respondents participated in research. They were university students; gender of the file has been evenly distributed. The average age was 25.32 years. Research was conducted at the beginning of 2010.

Research tool

Personal morality was followed by Lind's methodology assumed MJT (Moral Judgement Test, 2002), the test of moral reasoning. This test places the individual from moral dilemmas, and it offers both positive and negative arguments justifying a procedure actor. Arguments are different levels of moral reasoning by Kohlberg (1969), which correspond with autonomy or heteronomy of personal morality. First respondent determined whether it agrees or disagrees with the conduct of actors in the various dilemmas and then to the range - 4 to + 4 bands, to what extent it agrees with those arguments.

It is possible to assess the level of individual moral judgments (preference of moral stage) on the basis of the outcomes of the MJT. The each stage is characterized by 4 items, which determines the highest total preferred stage. This figure reveals the attitudes of individuals identified by Kohlberg's six stages of moral reasoning. In this way we can determine which stage of moral reasoning level of the individual prefers more, respectively less, which means type of personal morality.

Research results

The following chart describes the percentage of respondents in the different stages of moral reasoning.

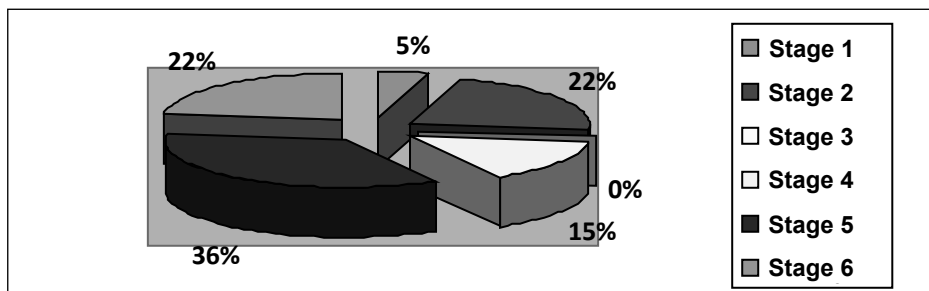


Chart 1 Percentage of respondents in each moral stage (n = 82)

The highest number of respondents (n = 30) prefer the fifth stage of post-conventional moral reasoning. Respondents should encourage a sense of duty, role, however, they should play a sense of justice and law, which would be a gradual awareness of the relativity laws. This result coincides with research findings of Lind (2002), which argues that the vast majority of subjects preferred the most “legitimate” fifth stage.

Supreme, the sixth stage of moral reasoning belongs to 18 participants of research, which should characterize freely chosen ethical principles, acquired as universal values of justice. It follows that an autonomous type of personal morality characterizes 48 individuals from our research group. This is the type of personal morality based on the moral values, principles and policies, regardless of social order and authority of persons or groups.

The first and second stage of moral reasoning appeared in 22 respondents, of which 4 should behave so that the rules do not exceed the designated authority and 18 should be held morally right, but only because it pays them to themselves, it is individualistic docility. This level describes the pre-conventional heteronomous personal morality of individuals whose moral evaluation is based on misconduct and physical and psychological consequences of the proceedings. Twelve individuals prefer the fourth stage of moral reasoning, which should portray a sense of obligation to authority and existing social rules. They should act morally right, because their acts are trying to keep the company running.

Conventional level of moral reasoning, which involves personal morality, characterized by loyalty to social attitudes and expectations of the social requirements, also

presents the third stage. It had not occurred in our research group. Though it should retain some caution in extrapolating conclusions drawn from our research findings (not explicitly assume the homogeneity of the surveyed sample, the continuity of their moral principles at the time, the finality of external and internal conditions, etc.), our results identify the personal morality of our respondents. We conclude that the vast majority of monitored individuals prefer the fifth stage of moral reasoning, which refers to autonomous personal morality.

Discussion, conclusion

In relation to differentiation of positive psychology syllabus defined by its pioneers in the strengths of different cultures, individual personalities, which reflect the fundamental properties of positive people and together form a complex called the concept of good character. Place between the individual and personal morality as a particular strength of human personality (see Kordačová, 2007, 2009). It becomes the inspiration for intrusions of positive psychology and psychology of health.

Ability to evaluate myself own (personal) moral values and also be able to stand up against the demands to think and act in accordance with regulations, according to dissenting Snyder and Lopez (2002) is elemental dimension of well-being. In this context, the autonomous personal morality (the vast majority of our respondents) considered as determinants of mental well-being, mental health. Positive indications of personal morality towards mental health and reveal other foreign authors, for example Conrad, 1994; Brandt, Rozin, 1997; Liaschenko, 1998 and others. Match of the view that morality and mental health are inextricably linked. In connection with these research findings we can state that personal morality as a strength of personality is one of the major determinants of mental health. Its inclusion in research of psychology of health is desirable and almost certainly would bring a variety of enriching insight into the current minimum in this review field research.

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OSOBNÁ MORÁLKA AKO DETERMINANT MENTÁLNEHO ZDRAVIA

Abstrakt: Príspevok predstavuje čiastkové zistenia riešenia grantového projektu VEGA 1/0826/10. Ponúka deskripciu osobnej morálky ako determinantu mentálneho zdravia na vybranom výskumnom súbore 82 respondentov. Získané výsledky nadobudnuté aplikáciou testu morálneho usudzovania (MJT) dokumentujú, že prevažná väčšina jednotlivcov preferuje postkonvenčné morálne zmýšľanie v zmysle schopnosti odolať sociálnym tlakom a byť nezávislým od hodnotenia a očakávania druhých – čo charakterizuje autonómnou osobnú morálku. Tento záver predpokladá, že autonómia ako jedna zo základných dimenzií štruktúry mentálneho zdravia bude indikovať pozitívny vzťah so duševnou pohodou.

Kľúčové slová: osobná morálka, mentálne zdravie, heteronómia, autonómia