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**SELF-ACTUALIZATION AS THE FACTOR OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH OF WOMEN WHO RAISE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

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The article shows the results of empirical research of level and structure of self-actualization in mothers, raising children with special needs. The obtained data's analysis points that the desire for self-actualization is common for them, they strive to develop themselves, and this is the sign of their psychological health. But eventually the self-actualization level of women, who raise disabled children, has a negative downward trend.

Key words: self-actualization, psychological health, children with special needs, women.

У статті наведені результати емпіричного дослідження рівня та структури самоактуалізації матерів, що виховують дітей з особливими потребами. Аналіз отриманих даних вказує на те, що таким матерям властиве прагнення до самоактуалізації, вони прагнуть реалізувати себе, а це є ознакою їх психологічного здоров'я. Але згодом рівень самоактуалізації жінок, що виховують дітей-інвалідів, має негативну тенденцію до зниження.

Ключові слова: самоактуалізація, психологічне здоров'я, діти з особливими потребами, жінки.

В статье приведены результаты эмпирического исследования уровня и структуры самоактуализации женщин, которые воспитывают детей с особенными потребностями. Анализ полученных данных указывает на то, что таким матерям свойственна самоактуализация, они стремятся себя реализовать, а это является признаком их психологического здоровья. Но со временем уровень самоактуализации женщин, воспитывающих детей-инвалидов, имеет негативную тенденцию к уменьшению.

Ключевые слова: самоактуализация, психологическое здоровье, дети с особенными потребностями, женщины.

The problem of children's early disability is extremely critical for modern Ukraine. The amount of children with congenital malformations is growing every year. But if the problem of maturity and adaptation of such children is paid at least some attention to from the government and scientists, then the question about personality, inner world of the person who is engaged in upbringing, is almost never arisen. Often this heavy burden lies down on mother. The event of invalid child's birth can change woman's life forever. In course of time, depending on child's growing, mother's inner world transforms, too.

Aspiration for self-actualization is completely natural for a healthy person. Mothers of children with special needs are not the exceptions. The health of the person, who self-actualizes, according to A. Maslow, is connected with satisfaction of main (basic) needs. When satisfaction of basic psychological needs, like the need of security, of love, of respect, of self-respect, of identity and self-actualization is impossible it leads to diseases and different kinds of disorders. According to Maslow the self-actualization process isn't a moment act, but it's an endless process, it's a way of living, relationship with the world [1]. According to C. Rogers self-actualization is a striving of a person for more complete maturity and demonstration his own personal abilities and potential [2]. We consider that self-actualization should be regarded as a process of self-implementation, a process of searching and maintaining course of life and sense of existing. Tendency to self-implementation is an important factor of personal maturity and psychological health.

The striving for self-actualization of mothers, who bring up children with special needs, is confronted with different difficulties, diffidence and own weakness. That's why they give up the obstacles, refuse the desire for showing their worth, for self-actualization.

During the child grows up the mother has more time for self-implementation, for implementation her own potential in professional activity, interpersonal relationship, different hobbies, et cetera. But we can observe another situation with a mother, who raises a child with special needs. Such mothers oftener tell about disappointment and loss of hope of professional implementation, show diffidence and loss of confidence to outward things.

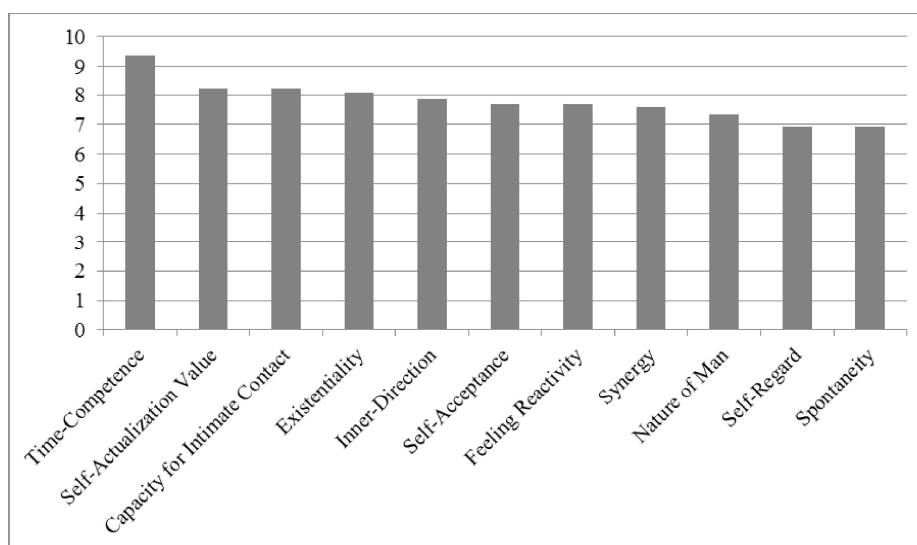
The aim of the given work is to conduct a comparative analysis of level and structure of self-actualization of mothers, who bring up children with special needs, with different periods of children's disability.

For achievement the aim we used the "Self-actualization test by E. Shostrom" in adaptation of N.F. Kalinina. The Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) allows us to measure self-actualization as many-sided value. POI was developed from A. Maslow's theory of self-actualization, the concept of psychological perception of time and subject temporal orientation by F. Perls and R. May, ideas of C. Rogers and other theorists of existential-humanistic direction in psychology. The specific POI questions were chosen from numerous set of evaluative and behavioral indicators, which is natural for a healthy person, who self-implements. We used the sample average characteristics for a quantitative analysis.

In the research took part 60 mothers, whose children have from birth the following diseases: cerebral palsy, delayed psychomotor development, Down syndrome, hydrocephalus, microcephaly, epilepsy,

congenital abnormality of the brain, syndrome of motion disorders, autism, CNS pathology, double hemiplegia, sensorineural deafness, congenital orthopedic pathology, West syndrome and rinolohiya. The investigated were divided for 2 groups depending on age of child's disability. The first group included parents of children aged from 1 to 3 years, the second one contained parents of children aged from 7 to 10 years.

As a result of diagnostic the mothers who formed the first group of subjects we got the structure and level of self-actualization.



Picture 1. Structure and level of self-actualization of mothers, who have children with young age of disability.

The results of the questionnaire are all indicators of self-actualization at the average level of severity. Also, it should be noticed that scale "Time-Competence" tends to a high level of expression. This scale in particular E. Shostrom connects manifestation of personality, who is striving for self-actualization. This shows that women, who bring up children with special needs aged under 3 years, able to live the present time, trying not to postpone their life and don't seek refuge in the past. At the same moment the actual pleasure of «here and now» is not always present in women. From time to time they tend to deepening into personal experience.

The scale "Self-Actualization Value" and the scale "Capacity for Intimate Contact" take the second place in the structure of self-actualization of the mothers who have young children with special needs. These scales have the average level of characteristics of women in this sample. The adoption of the highest values is an obligatory attribute of a personality, who is able to self-actualization. This fact indicates the presence of mothers, raising young children with special needs, the healthy desire for productive communication with other people and the outside world. Besides that, these women use primitive manipulations for achieving their own interests. Relatively to the scale "Capacity for Intimate Contact," it should be noticed, that mothers are capable to adequate self-expression in relations, to self-disclosure, to receiving pleasure from relations.

In the structure of self-actualization of women-mothers, who have children with special needs aged under 3 years almost at the same level expressed the scales: "Necessity for knowledge", "Inner-Direction", "Self-Acceptance", "Feeling Reactivity", "Synergy", "Nature of Man". This is evidenced by the fact that these mothers enthusiastically tackle something new, try to learn more and actively adopt experience of other mothers, who also have children with disabilities. Besides, they don't loss belief in possibility of curing their child, they believe in their strength and adequately estimate themselves, direct on own and external points of view.

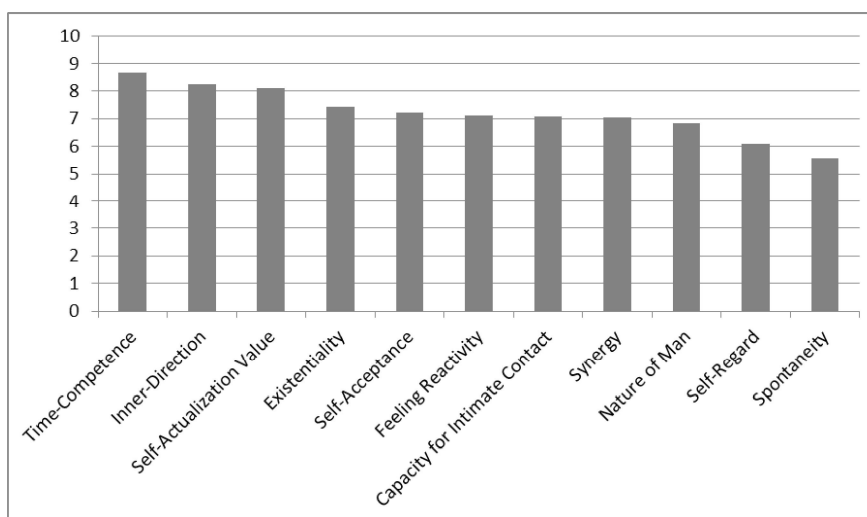
In structure of self-actualization of mothers, who raise children with special needs the last point occupy the scales "Self-Regard" and "Spontaneity". As this scales have the medium level of expression we can declare that the mothers have characteristics of psychologically healthy person – aliveness, self-support, relative independence and positive freedom, absence of feeling of loneliness.

Thus, at the early stage of child's disability mother, who raises this child, has all the indexes of psychologically healthy person at the middle level with a tendency to increase.

As a result of the diagnosis of mothers from the second group of investigated, we got the following structure and the self-actualization level.

The self-actualization level indexes of the mothers, who bring up children with special needs aged from 7 to 10 years old, are on the middle level of severity.

The highest level of severity in the self-actualization structure of this examined group got the scales "Time-Competence", "Inner-Direction" and "Self-Actualization Value". It means that mothers, who bring up children with special needs eventually don't lose creative attitude to life, have adequate attitude to the past, present and future, head for the highest human values. At the same time, these figures tend to decrease.



Picture 2. Structure and level of self-actualization of mothers, who have children with older age of disability.

Like the mothers of the first examined group in the second group in the structure of self-actualization at the middle level are the scales: "Existentiality", "Self-Acceptance", "Feeling Reactivity" and "Synergy". We consider that exactly these features as ability to development, aspiration for new information, exchange of knowledge and information with others, give additional strength to mothers to confront her child's disease.

At the same time in the self-actualization structure of woman, who brings up invalid-child aged from 7 to 10 years the last points have the scales: "Self-Regard" and "Spontaneity". Despite the fact that the indexes of these scales are at the middle level of expression, in comparison with mothers, who have invalid-children under 3 years old, and they tend to decrease. Moreover, that means that women find themselves hostages to the circumstances and weakly consider themselves as free individuals. To our mind, this is directly related to raising a child with special needs, whom mother can not leave. Awareness of the heavy burden she has to bear till the end of life only deepens the state of hopelessness mother and prevent her towards self-actualization.

Also, these women do not have enough self-confidence, and it reduces the level of self-esteem. Such mothers start putting the blame on themselves for not being capable to bring the child up, and for not having done everything they have been able. Gradually the feeling of guilt increases, and the world around seems to them as not trustworthy and even as an enemy. They lose faith in people because "in the world of other people everything is well, all are healthy, but I have real trouble and instead of support I receive only condemnation or sympathy."

So, women, who have children with special needs of 7-10 years old, have the middle level of self-actualization severity with a downward trend, but still are psychologically healthy individuals.

With the purpose of comparative analysis of differences in the level of self-actualization of mothers depending on the time the child's disability, we used Mann-Whitney U-criterion. The significant difference in the level of severity of the scale "Spontaneity" was found (at  $p \leq 0,04$ ), which is inherent to self-actualizing personality. We found out, that in course of time mothers, who raise a disabled child, lose confidence in the world. This gradually leads to disbelief in their own strength, to reduce of confidence. We can say that the older child with a disability, the more his mother lost hope for his recovery and the less she implements herself in other areas, the less attention she pays to her own life path and she looks narrower at the meaning of her existence.

The self-actualization structure of mothers practically does not change depending on the time the child's disability.

Summarizing the received results, we can make the following conclusions:

- 1.Regardless of time of the child's disability it's peculiar to this child's mother to have the desire for self-actualization, and this is a sign of psychologically healthy personality.
- 2.Dependent on time of the child's disability the self-actualization level of its mother can change. Thus, the older the invalid-child is, the lower the self-actualization level of the mother is.
- 3.The self-actualization structure of mothers, who have children with special needs doesn't change in course of time.

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