

## Future psychologists' vision of the needs of society for psychological aid and of their own professional fulfillment

Wyobrażenia przyszłych psychologów o zapotrzebowaniu na pomoc psychologiczną w społeczeństwie oraz odnośnie ich własnej realizacji zawodowej

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### Abstract

The article is a study of the future psychologists' vision of the potential scope of needs within modern society in terms of psychological practice and their vision of the future professional fulfillment as psychologists. The research has corroborated that the students' views of their future activity as psychologists are socially oriented. At the same time, mastering this profession turned out to depend on the personal context of the survey participants, which may significantly differentiate between the public-social and personal-professional context of its implementation. It has been proved that the recognition of the professional psychological practice as a category of "labor" enhances the capacity of psychologists' charitable contribution into the aid provided to the population, including the aid provided in emergency situations, which exist at present in the area of hostilities in Ukraine. The survey results prove that the need for mastering a psychological profession derives from one's own complicated individual and family experiences, motivating a person to master the methods of psychological self-help. At the same time, professional psychological practice requires that students should reconsider their own views on distinguishing between their psychological competence concerning their own life and professional work as a psychologist.

*Keywords:* vision, profession, future psychologist, emergency situation, social orientation

### Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie badań dotyczących postrzegania przez studentów psychologii zapotrzebowania współczesnego społeczeństwa na usługi psychologiczne oraz opinii przyszłych psychologów odnośnie możliwości samorealizacji zawodowej. Badania wskazują, że studenci postrzegają swoją przyszłość zawodową jako działania nakierowane na szersze społeczeństwo. Jednak postrzeganie siebie w zawodzie psychologa jest uzależnione od osobistych doświadczeń respondentów, co jednoznacznie ukierunkowuje motywację jako: działania dla społeczeństwa, działania samopomocowe lub wyłącznie jako aspiracje do posiadania prestiżowego zawodu. Stwierdzono, że uznanie pracy psychologa w kategoriach „powołania” powoduje wzrost częstszego traktowania jej, jako charytatywnej działalności psychologa w niesieniu pomocy ludności, szczególnie w sytuacji ekstremalnej, którą między innymi jest obecnie strefa walk na Ukrainie. Wyniki badań jednocześnie wykazały, że potrzeba uzyskania zawodu psychologa wynika także z własnego doświadczenia sytuacji trudnych przez osoby badane w sferze osobistej lub rodzinnej, co motywuje studentów do poznawania metod psychologicznej samopomocy. Jednocześnie profesjonalne przygotowanie psychologów wymaga od studentów świadomości własnych problemów natury psychicznej oraz umiejętności analizy i rozróżniania trudności życia osobistego a doświadczeń w pracy zawodowej jako psychologa.

*Słowa kluczowe:* samorealizacja w zawodzie psychologa, postrzeganie zawodu psychologa, doświadczenia trudne, działania prospołeczne

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### Introduction

The establishment of a psychology as a profession in social and historical practice of various countries, as well as generating social requirements for psychological aid shall demand a certain level of development within the society and understanding of human nature. In the last decade, in Ukraine the profession of a psychologist has become more and more popular: the network of psychological services under various institutions is developing rapidly, the need for using psychological knowledge in practical activities is growing, the flow of adults willing to

master the profession of a psychologist as a second higher education is increasing. At present, in the field of Ukrainian science the works of such scholars as O. Maltseva, N. Shevchenko, S. Maksymenko, I. Druzhynina, Z. Kisarchuk, V. Panok and others are devoted to studying psychological peculiarities of mastering a profession of a psychologist [1-4]. Research studies show that entering the labor market by a psychologist entails shaping of his/her vision of the profession and its requirements, gaining proficiency in it, establishing one's own system of work and coordinating it with the market needs, obtaining professional self-

awareness by an individual, and developing professional "I-concept"[2].

In our study we have strived to define the future psychologists' vision of the potential scope of needs within modern society related to psychological practice and of their own professional fulfillment as psychologists.

### Research results

The narrative was chosen as the principal method for conducting the research activity. The guidelines on the text writing consisted of two components. The first component aimed at clarifying the students' vision of the needs for psychological aid available in the society, and the second one – at finding out the understanding of their own fulfillment in the chosen professional sphere. The obtained data was processed by applying methods of qualitative and quantitative statistics, in particular the method of expert evaluation was used, as well as correlation and cluster analysis, and the Fischer criterion for comparison of the acquired data of the sample group.

The sample group consisted of the students of correspondence and extramural departments of higher education institutions, who receive psychologist education at the level of bachelor's or master's degree (including those who receive the second higher education). In general, the sample group included 100 persons and consisted mainly of females (90 persons – women, 10 – men) from young to mature adults (20-66 years old).

The texts analysis enabled defining the students' vision of those spheres of human life where psychologists can work, among which the most conspicuous is the sys-

tem of education (88 references, 52%), the individual needs and those concerning family life issues (78 references), the practice of psychotherapist and social support (62 references each), and finally there are branches of enterprises (58 references) and medicine (52 references). At the same time the future psychologists are oriented at establishing their own private practice (52 references). Our study confirms the well-known fact of "people coming into psychological profession" for the benefit of their personal development (68 references) and following aspiration of being helpful to the others (72 references), and also for the benefit of improving relationships in their own families (42 references). The respondents also view psychological knowledge as a form of improving the context of their actual activities (38 references) and their professional success (28 references), since at the time of our survey all of them were employed and their places of work in the majority of cases were not related to the field of psychological practice. However, it turned out that although the job placements for the professional psychologists are quite extensive, their popularity was not that attractive for the sample group respondents - future psychologists (only 4 references in the text of narrative).

The analysis of the data obtained regarding the perception by future psychologists of the actual situation of military actions in Ukraine indicates rather features of dichotomy – when the psychological practice as everyday activity remains highly important if compared to the need for psychological aid connected with the military activities on the territory of Ukraine (see Pic. 1).

Picture 1. Frequency of references about the society's needs for psychological aid

Actual situation with military actions in the country "Anti-terrorist operation"	Emergency psychological aid	Psychological aid against destruction	Psychological aid aiming at peace and calmness	Preventative psychological aid	Psychological aid concerning everyday issues
76 references	60 references	30 references	34 references	46 references	76 references

Table 1. Prevalence of the general context needs over the personal and professional needs of future psychologists

Categories of comparison	Context of comparison		p
	general	personal	
Manifestations of military conflict (Anti-Terrorist Operation)	46	6	<0.001
Acceptance of profession by society	48	14	<0.001
Emergency psychological aid	34	12	0.016
Everyday psychological support	44	22	0.033
Psychological aid against destruction	20	4	0.028
Preventative psychological aid	32	12	0.028
Working in the educational system	52	22	0.003
Working with families and by individual requests	42	18	0.016
Working in the field of social support	40	12	0.003
Pure professional psychological practice	38	16	0.023
Social level	74	38	0.001
State level	30	8	0.009

It has been proved that future psychologists turned out to be more oriented to working at the individual, family or group level and have little interest in the issues of welfare policy development and state management in this professional area. The comparative analysis of the students' visions of their own requirements in the profession vs. the society's needs for psychological aid in general shows there are no active tendencies for eliminating destructive social manifestations among the future psychologists (see Table 1). It may indicate that the profession of a psychologist is mainly perceived by the students not as a "first aid", but as a specific type of activity which requires certain conditions of work, first of all establishing a psychological contact necessary for the work. Thus, it can be stated that understanding by future psychologists of the actual crisis situation of the Ukrainian society with the increased need for psychological aid is not considered by them as an incentive for the direct participation in this process. Table 1 shows that the students' vision of the society needs for psychological aid (*general context*) considerably prevails over the vision of their own role in this process (*individual context*).

The analysis of the identified prevalence of the individual context shows that personal development is viewed by the future psychologists as a condition of their professional success, which is reinforced by their aspiration for professionalism in the field of psychological support (see Table 2). The overwhelming majority of the respondents emphasized the significance of qualitative professional knowledge and the importance of high-quality professional training in the field of psychology (128 references), which is confirmed by the authors of other studies [6].

Table 2. Prevalence of individual and professional context needs over the general context needs of future psychologists

Categories of comparison	Context of comparison		p
	general	personal	
Private practice	6	40	<0.001
For the benefit of improving work activities	2	24	0.002
For the benefit of self-fulfillment	14	42	0.003

The correlation analysis of the individual context of students' views on their own self-fulfillment in the profession of a psychologist allowed us to empirically corroborate the following postulates existing in the psychological practice, and namely:

- the significance of the principle of impossibility of being professionally useful in the issues of psychological aid for one's own family members. It is indicated by the discovered reverse correlative link at the level of 0.05 between the index of "family" and "professionalism"

(-0,28) and "family psychological practice" and "orientation to personal development" (-0.029);

- the profession of a psychologist is not identical to other types of work where psychological knowledge performs only the function of the professional competence reinforcement. It is indicated by the discovered negative correlative link at the level of 0.05 between the index of "work of psychologist as profession" and "non-professional training" as improvement of one's level of competence by means of psychological knowledge (-0.28);

- transparent and contractual relationships in the practice of a psychologist are the conditions for increasing his/her competence and maintaining his/her health, as well as his/her potential commitment to providing charitable support for the society and following specific needs. It is indicated by the discovered positive correlation at the level of 0.05, which unites into one group the following indices: "orientation of practice to family support", "pure psychological practice", "private practice", "everyday psychological activity", "individual and social level of practice", and also the connection between the index of "understanding of psychological work as a profession" and such indices as "psychologist's practice in an agency", "charitable work of a psychologist", "emergency psychological aid" which are based on the willingness of the society to include psychological aid into their culture (see Table 3) [1, 4, 5 - 6].

In our study, specific categories were also revealed having no statistically significant distinctions in terms of their manifestations in the context of individual and general blocs. The qualitative analysis of these categories indicates some tendencies of combining the social and individual areas in psychological aid provision, where attaining of well-being is the need of each party of the process, both of the psychologist and the service user. Thus, the needs for personal development, the motives for supporting one's own family and attaining one's own professional growth, the wish to be of use to the others and willingness for charity are equally important both at the general and individual professionally-oriented levels. The basis for their implementation again is seen in professionalism and, this time, in the official employment and working in agencies (see Table 4). In such conditions, the professional psychological practice can both serve as a charitable act and remain within the category of jobs with adequate level of financial provision.

It can be stated that the possibility of employment is considered by the students as a resource of their potential contribution into the society development in the issues of psychological well-being. The qualities of moderation and reliance on resources in the issues of psychological aid, which we discovered, are commendable, since underestimation of

Table 3. Correlative comparisons of the categories from individual bloc

Categories	Professional sphere	Family sphere	Emergency work	Every day life	Charity	Work	Professionalism	For the benefit of job	For the benefit of family	For the benefit of self-fulfillment	Private practice	Practice in an agency	Individual level	Social level
Professional sphere	1	-0.06	-0.16	-0.1	0.11	0.05	-0.25	0.14	0.29*	0.18	0.31*	-0.06	0.08	-0.12
Family sphere	-0.06	1	-0.01	0.13	0.08	0.16	0.01	-0.02	0	-0.29*	-0.06	-0.07	-0.08	-0.05
Emergency work	-0.16	-0.01	1	0.25	0.34*	0.28*	0.09	-0.06	-0.2	-0.19	0.08	-0.05	-0.01	0.22
Everyday life	-0.1	0.13	0.25	1	0.16	0.1	0.3*	-0.07	0.07	-0.06	-0.04	0.27	0	0.28*
Charity	0.11	0.08	0.34*	0.16	1	0.33*	0.18	0.01	-0.1	-0.26	0.09	0.33*	-0.2	0
Work	0.05	0.16	0.28*	0.1	0.33*	1	0.16	-0.28*	-0.27	-0.02	0.1	0.29*	-0.1	-0.08
Social commitment	-0.18	-0.04	0.38**	0.2	-0.02	0.09	0.03	-0.09	-0.08	0.01	0.14	0.35*	-0.04	0.16
Professionalism	-0.25	0.01	0.09	0.3*	0.18	0.16	1	-0.05	-0.28*	-0.11	0.1	0.13	0.22	0.14
For the benefit of job	0.14	-0.02	-0.06	-0.07	0.01	-0.28*	-0.05	1	0.38**	0.09	0.11	-0.08	0.1	0.04
For the benefit of family	0.29*	0	-0.2	0.07	-0.1	-0.27	-0.28*	0.38**	1	0.23	-0.04	-0.08	0	0.18
For the benefit of self-fulfillment	0.18	-0.29*	-0.19	-0.06	-0.26	-0.02	-0.11	0.09	0.23	1	0.05	-0.12	0.02	-0.25
Private practice	0.31*	-0.06	0.08	-0.04	0.09	0.1	0.1	0.11	-0.04	0.05	1	0.17	-0.06	0.03
Practice in an agency	-0.06	-0.07	-0.05	0.27	0.33*	0.29*	0.13	-0.08	-0.08	-0.12	0.17	1	-0.07	0.18
Individual level	0.08	-0.08	-0.01	0	-0.2	-0.1	0.22	0.1	0	0.02	-0.06	-0.07	1	0.28*
Social level	-0.12	-0.05	0.22	0.28*	0	-0.08	0.14	0.04	0.18	-0.25	0.03	0.18	0.28*	1

Table 4. Absence of discrepancies in the evaluation of general and individual priorities by future psychologists

Categories of comparison	Context of comparison		p
	general	individual	
Psychological practice as charity	20	16	0.795
Psychological practice as a job	18	20	1
For the benefit of peace and calmness	20	8	0.148
For the benefit of one's family development	18	22	0.803
For the benefit of others	34	28	0.666
Non-professional training	10	16	0.554
Working in an agency	2	2	1
Professionalism	36	54	0.107
Individual level	26	18	0.47

one's abilities and their non-ecological usage may entail high risks of exhaustion, emotional burnout and fatigue, thus increasing the risks of probability of their compensation when working with clients (individuals, groups and organizations), which is inadmissible in psychological practice [4].

The applied tree-clustering analysis has shown that the acceptance of psychological profession in society (as a cultural factor) also contributes to combining of individual and general levels of its functioning. It positively influences the processes of acquiring high professional level by future psychologists and their commitment to enhance their comprehension of psychological practice taking into account the greater demands of social life.

The tree diagram records the inclusion of psychological knowledge into the actual workplace area ("the focus on developing relations at a workplace") that is close to the category "students' aspiration to support their families". This cluster may indicate the psychological competence development as a component of various professions.

The second cluster is the combination of categories of "professionalism", "everyday psychological work" and "the level of social demands for psychological aid". Such a combination can be interpreted as a condition for legalization of the activities performed by psychologists as professionals by defining their role and place in social practice, which is possible with the increase of social and psychological culture in the issues of psychological aid.

Another cluster can also be significant, as it indicates the students' vision of the importance of meeting certain conditions in terms of providing urgent psychological support. Thus, in opinion of the future psychologists, it is the psychological culture of the society (as willingness to accept and provide psychological aid) that is the condition stipulating the effective application of urgent psychological aid. This fact accounts for the identified tendencies of discrepancy between the high level of students' evaluation of the actual situation of military actions in Ukraine

and the low level of seeing possibility for personal involvement in psychological aid in this area.

The conducted study allows us to draw the **following conclusions**.

The study has confirmed that students' vision of their future work as psychologists is socially-oriented, whereas the process of mastering their profession turned out to be considerably dependent on the personal context of its participants. Thus, although psychologist's work is socially-oriented and focused on the requirements for psychological aid for the population, the social and individual-professional context of its performance can be considerably different. It has been proved that the acknowledgement of the professional psychological practice as a category of "labor" and its inclusion into the process of social interaction reinforces the resource indices concerning charitable socially-oriented contribution of a psychologist into the aid to the population, including the emergency situations currently available in the area of hostilities in Ukraine.

It has been ascertained that the acceptance of the psychological profession by the society strongly affects the processes of acquiring professional competencies by future psychologists and their willingness to broaden their understanding of psychological support taking into consideration the demands for it.

The study results allow us to testify that the need for mastering the psychological profession is caused by personal complex experiences of individual and family nature, encouraging a person to master the methods of psychological self-help. At the same time, the professional psychological practice highlights considerable limitations in this process, thus demanding the students to revise their own views in terms of distinguishing between the competence concerning their own lives and their professional work as psychologists.

The conducted study raises the issue of urgent imperative for exploring the connection between the psychological culture of society and the place and role of a psychologist in it.

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