

Original article

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Studying Self-Actualization of Men for the First Time Held in a Pre-Trial Detention Center with regard to Other Characteristics of Their Personality

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Abstract

Introduction: the article studies the specifics of self-actualization of men aged 25–50, for the first time held in a pre-trial detention center as the suspected and the accused. This mechanism was studied in connection with other personality characteristics, presumably causing its launch in conditions of imprisonment. The goal was to express the character of self-actualization with a personality structure consisting of five basic traits (neuroticism, extroversion, affection, self-control, expressiveness), life-meaning orientations, guilt, reflexivity and coping. *Methods:* psychological testing with the help of the Personal Orientation Inventory, “Big Five personality traits”; “Life-Meaning Orientations”, GuiltInventory, Reflexivity test (IMR), Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ). *Results:* the surveyed can achieve genuine self-actualization instead of criminal, but for this they need the help of a psychologist (the share of men with pseudo-self-actualization amounts to 5.6%; 20.6% has a low overall level of self-actualization). The group is described by the following: a high level of neuroticism in the personality structure combined with a low level of affection; tending to low indicator of meaningfulness of life (46.7% of men have a low indicator); an average level of guilt (mainly guilt as a state), while half of the sample shows a low level of moral norms; a fairly high level of reflexivity (46% of men have high indicators); the coping strategy “escape/avoidance” or (less often) “confrontation” is used by the surveyed, and “self-control” is unpopular among them. *Conclusions:* the results show the presence of the problem of self-actualization in this category of men, but also the possibility of its resolution through the correctional and developmental work of psychologists aimed at optimizing personal characteristics closely related to self-actualization (coping, meaningfulness of life, neuroticism and affection, reflexivity, guilt).

Keywords: men held in pre-trial detention centers; self-actualization; personal characteristics: life-meaning orientations, guilt, individual measure of

reflexivity, coping; connection of self-actualization features with other personal characteristics.

5.3.9. Legal psychology and security psychology.

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Introduction. The scientific works devoted to legal psychology consider negative factors of the situation of detention in pre-trial detention centers of the penitentiary system. A positive approach to understanding the phenomena of the research field of legal psychology is still poorly manifested. However, it is indisputable that any situation, even the situation of detention in a pre-trial detention center, in addition to negative, has its positive aspects for the person who finds himself in it.

It is known that the status of a crime suspect, the situation of detention in general and the socio-psychological factors associated with it are a powerful stressor for a defendant, i.e. the one against whom a criminal case is initiated, capable of having a devastating effect on his psyche [1; 4; 10; 11; 13; 15; 26–30]. To cope with it (to exclude suicide), the defendant needs some personal prerequisites, which some authors call resilience [15] or stress resistance, others – coping (coping behavior) [3; 13; 26; 30]. Following principles of the positive approach in psychology, we propose to define the concept of “self-actualization” [12], introduced into scientific circulation in 1939 by K. Goldstein to determine the “ability to rebuild the body under the influence of trauma” [14]. K. Goldstein was sure that “self-actualization is the main and only motive of the organism serving as a prerequisite for self-realization of the whole organism, the basis for development and self-improvement, creative tendency of the individual” [14].

Further the problem of self-actualization was thoroughly worked out by psychologists of the existential-humanistic direction (A. Maslow, C. Rogers, Ch. Buhler, E. Shostrom, etc.). In a broad sense, the term was understood by them as a person’s desire to self-actualize and constantly develop. As Ch. Buhler, the “concept of self-realization originates from F. Nietzsche and C.G. Jung, appears in various versions of works of

K. Horney, E. Fromm, K. Goldstein, F. Fromm-Reichman, A. Maslow and other authors who try to create all-encompassing theories of ultimate life goals” [25]. A. Maslow [16], C. Rogers [20], V. Frankl [21], E. Fromm [22] and other foreign [9; 18] and domestic [6; 9; 24] researchers clarify that self-actualization can be deep (essential) and superficial; active and passive; harmonious and problematic; energetic and cautious. Hostility, fears, lack of motivation, habit of idleness, and social pressure hinder the process of self-actualization.

Speaking about self-actualization of mature men held for the first time in a pre-trial detention center, the work of Ch. Buhler is worth mentioning. Unlike other researchers who consider self-actualization as an indispensable way of self-realization of a person, she notices that those who have lost themselves, their purpose need self-actualization [25]. If everything goes on as usual in life, and it brings satisfaction, then self-realization and self-development are enough for a person. The same idea is shared by V. Frankl [21].

A historical and critical analysis of the study of self-actualization as a driving force of personal development was presented by D.A. Leont’ev [14]. The value of his work lies in the fact that he noted vulnerabilities in this theory, but emphasized its scientific significance and showed prospects for development.

In terms of combining the theory and practice of self-actualization, the developments of E. Shostrom are valuable. According to the scientist, this concept is integrative, including a number of structural components. His method of studying this phenomenon, known to psychologists as the Personal Orientation Inventory, allows differentiating individuals with genuine self-actualization (presumably, the share of such people in society is 68%), pseudo-self-actualization and self-actualization due to painful mental changes – patients

with neuroses suffering from mental disorders [23]. This author supplemented the theory of self-actualization by drawing attention to an alternative version of self-realization – a person-manipulator [23].

There is an insignificant number of empirical studies of self-actualization carried out on samples consisting of suspected, accused and convicted persons held in places of deprivation of liberty. Therefore, they are especially valuable. D.V. Zhmurov and A.G. Zav'yalov raise the problem of criminal self-actualization and present results of their own empirical research. The surveyed are divided into 3 groups – citizens who do not have criminal records; convicts serving their sentences for the first time; repeat offenders. The results of the Personal Orientation Inventory by E. Shostrom shows that by the level of self-actualization law-abiding citizens are in the lead; they are followed by a group of repeat offenders; the group of convicts serving their sentences for the first time closes the rating (has the lowest indicators). The authors point out several reasons why individuals detained for the first time often prefer criminal self-actualization [6].

M.A. Zheludkov and V.E. Kovalevskii wonder, for what reasons people with a high level of self-actualization commit mercenary crimes? As a result, they come to the conclusion that it is the lack of opportunities to meet individual needs that appeared at the next stage of their life, ... therefore, self-actualization cannot be considered the end of personality development [5]. It is not a goal, but a way for a person to return to his destiny and continue self-realization (self-fulfillment).

Sharing this thought, we proceed from the assumption that the men detained in the pre-trial detention center did not expect to be in this situation, which means that their goals either were not realized by them as fictitious, or did not correspond to the general line of their personal development, that is, they were false – these men “missed their purpose”. V.N. Volkov writes, “The very fact of the investigation usually causes apathy among people held in the pre-trial detention center for the first time. Many of them consider their lives ruined, and therefore, under the influence of emotional experiences and gradually increasing psychological disorders, they consider assistance to the investigation and the

court unnecessary and useless” [2, p. 299]. The control over a person in a pre-trial detention center is so comprehensive that it leads to the blurring of the boundaries of personality up to its destruction. This provokes interest in the process of self-actualization. However, not every person who finds himself in this penal institution in the status of the suspected or accused is able to independently embark on the path of reviving a genuine and better “I”. The informal participation of a penitentiary psychologist in his life situation is necessary.

K.V. Kovaleva believes that self-actualization is both a process, means, goal of personal development, and a property that determines its implementation, therefore it is necessary to fill the deficit of research on this phenomenon [9]. Psychologists who understand the key role of self-actualization in the process of re-socialization of persons who have committed a crime need not only knowledge, but also technologies for their practical application. Re-socialization of criminals is the goal of their activity, and self-actualization is the only way to achieve it.

Having conducted scientific and theoretical analysis of the literature on this problem, we worked out a model of empirical research of this mechanism in mature men first detained in a pre-trial detention center [12], in connection with other characteristics of their personality. At the same time, it was taken into account that researchers in self-actualization most often associated it with the normative development of personality (integrity of personality) [16; 20; 29; 30], life-meaning orientations [7; 24], guilt [2; 4; 26], individual measure of reflexivity [8; 11; 17], and coping [3; 13; 26].

Our model was implemented at the Moscow City Detention Center. The sample consisted of 214 men aged 25–50 (in age psychology, this period is defined as the “age of maturity”) first detained in a pre-trial detention center in the status of the suspected and accused (the average age of men is 37 years). Of them at the time of arrest, 69 people were unemployed (32.3%); 39 people – managers (18.2%); 79 people – workers (36.9%); 27 people – employees (12.6%); 81 people had higher education (37.9%), 83 people – specialized secondary (38.8%), 46 people – total average (21.5%), 4 people – incomplete average (1.9%); 32 people were mar-

ried (15.0%), 39 people cohabited (18.2%), 78 people were single (36.4%), 65 people were divorced (30.4%); 110 men had children (51.4%). The largest share in the sample was made up of men brought to criminal liability under Article 159 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation – 63 people (29.4%), followed by those convicted under Article 228 of the Criminal Code – 59 people (27.6%), Article 162 – 32 people (15.0%), Article 158 – 15 people (7.0%), Article 161 – 9 people (4.2%). The rest, 36 people (16.8%), were convicted under articles 105, 111, 163, 264, 128, 134, 165, 172, 186, 226 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. When selecting empirical material for this article, we were guided by two main criteria: 1) a man is detained in a pre-trial detention center for the first time; 2) the man's age is from 25 to 50 years.

The *purpose* of the empirical study was to identify the character of the relationship between self-actualization and personal characteristics, such as the personality structure, consisting of 5 basic features of a “normal” personality (neuroticism, extraversion, attachment, self-control, expressiveness); life-meaning orientations, guilt, reflexivity, coping of mature men, first held in a pre-trial detention center.

Research methods. The main method of collecting empirical data was the psychological testing. Six reliable and valid methods of psychodiagnostics were used, such as 1) E. Shostrom's test to study features of personality self-actualization by 14 parameters and its general level in adaptation by Yu.E. Aleshin, L.Ya. Gozman, M.V. Zagiki, M.V. Kroza; 2) the five-factor personality questionnaire (“Big Five personality traits”) by R. McCray and P. Costa adapted by M.V. Bodunov and S.D. Biryukov; 3) the “Life-Meaning Orientations” test by D.A. Leont'ev; 4) the questionnaire for assessing the severity of guilt (GuiltInventory), translated and adapted by I.M. Belik; 5) the methodology for determining an individual measure of reflexivity (IMR) by A.V. Karpov; 6) “Ways of Coping Questionnaire” (WCQ) adapted by T.L. Kryukova and E.V. Kuftyak.

Mathematical and statistical data processing was performed on the basis of the MsOfficeexcel package, IBMSPSSStatistics 23, Statistica 10.0 (correlation analysis of data was performed according to Pearson).

Results and their discussion

1. The results of the study of the features of self-actualization of mature men first taken into custody in a pre-trial detention center.

Table 1

Self-actualization indicators

Measured self-actualization indicators	Levels						Group-wide index (in stens)
	High		Average		Low		
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%	
1. Value of self-actualization	59	27.6	119	55.6	36	16.8	6.1
2. Synergy	58	27.1	101	47.2	55	25.7	6.1
3. Creativity	46	21.5	113	52.8	55	25.7	6.1
4. Self-regard	51	23.8	106	49.5	57	26.7	5.9
5. Capacity for intimate contact	57	26.7	106	49.5	51	23.8	5.9
6. Spontaneity	35	16.4	101	47.2	78	36.4	5.7
7. Acceptance of aggression	31	14.5	123	57.5	60	28.0	5.6
8. Self-support	48	22.4	105	49.1	61	28.5	5.4
9. Cognitive needs	47	22.0	92	43.0	75	35.0	5.3
10. Nature of man	19	8.9	136	63.5	59	27.6	5.2
11. Time competence	27	12.6	102	47.7	85	39.7	5.0
12. Feeling reactivity	24	11.2	103	48.1	87	40.7	5.0
13. Self-acceptance	31	14.5	109	50.9	74	34.6	5.0
14. Flexibility of behavior	27	12.6	99	46.3	88	41.1	4.9
POI general index	12	5.6	158	73.8	44	20.6	5.6

Notes. 10–8 stens – pseudo-self-actualization; 7.0–5.5 – self-actualization; 5.5–4.5 – mental and statistical norm; less than 4.0 stens – typical for people with mental disorders (neuroses, depression, addiction, etc).

The analysis of empirical data presented in Table 1 shows that the group-wide self-actualization index of the surveyed mature men detained in a pre-trial detention center (5, 6 stens) is at the border of the levels: “mental and statistical norm” and “self-actualization”. This probably means that these men have the possibility of activating the mechanism of human rebirth (genuine self-actualization), that they were at the point of bifurcation at the time of the examination, after which several options for choosing a line of behavior were possible: a) criminal self-actualization; b) nervous breakdown and mental illness; c) suicide; d) essential self-actualization. Another development of the situation is possible, though not typical.

The structure of the general level of self-actualization is dominated by three components, such as “value of self-actualization”, “synergy” (ability to perceive the world and people holistically) and “creativity” (a person becomes creative in an extreme situation,). Figuratively speaking, a man, finding himself in custody for the first time, seems to activate

the process of self-organization and change views to break through to a new level of self-realization. However, for this, most detained people are not flexible in behavior (this component lags behind in development compared to the 13 more developed ones) due to the dogmatism that has formed. The share of surveyed men with pseudo-self-actualization is low – 5.6% of the entire sample; at the same time, pseudo-self-actualization is more pronounced in such components as “value of self-actualization”, “synergy” and “capacity for intimate contact”. The proportion of men with a low overall level of self-actualization is significantly higher – 20.6% (the largest proportions are observed in three components, in particular, “flexibility of behavior”, “feeling reactivity”, “time competence”).

2. Results of the study of characteristics presumably associated with self-actualization, and possibly acting as its determinants.

Raw scores for each psychological diagnostics method are converted into sten scores and presented below in Table 2.

Summary table of indicators of personal characteristics of mature men first detained in a pre-trial detention center

Table 2

Measured self-actualization indicators	Levels						Group-wide index (in stens)
	High 10–8 stens		Average 7–5 stens		Низкий 4–1 stens		
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Personality structure consisting of 5 basic features of a “normal” personality (Big Five personality traits)							
1. Extroversion	4	1.9	95	44.4	115	53.7	4.2
2. Attachment	9	4.2	71	33.2	134	62.6	3.8
3. Expressiveness	49	22.9	128	59.8	37	17.3	6.2
4. Self-control	6	2.8	111	51.9	97	45.3	4.3
5. Neuroticism	93	43.5	104	48.6	17	7.9	7.4
Life-Meaning Orientations							
1. Locus of control “myself”. I am the master of life	54	25.2	81	37.9	79	36.9	5.4
2. Goals in life	43	20.1	94	43.9	77	36.0	5.4
3. Effectiveness of life, satisfaction with self-realization	42	19.6	93	43.5	79	36.9	5.3
4. The process of life, interest and emotional saturation	27	12.6	101	47.2	86	40.2	4.9
5. Locus of control “life”. Controllability of life	16	7.5	77	36.0	121	56.5	4.1
Overall level of meaningfulness of life	24	11.2	90	42.1	100	46.7	4.9
Guilt Inventory							
1 State guilt	97	45.3	79	36.9	38	17.8	6.7
2. Trait guilt	22	10.3	143	66.8	49	22.9	5.7
General level of guilt	15	7.0	153	71.5	46	21.5	5.7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Reflexivity test							
Reflexivity	99	46.3	96	44.8	19	8.9	7.0
Ways of Coping Questionnaire							
1. Escape /avoidance	89	41.6	100	46.7	25	11.7	6.7
2. Confrontation	76	35.5	113	52.8	25	11.7	6.5
3. Positive reassessment	62	29.0	117	54.7	35	16.3	6.1
4. Acceptance of responsibility	62	29.0	99	46.3	53	24.7	5.9
5. Problem solution planning	45	21.0	113	52.8	56	26.2	5.7
6. Distancing	47	22.0	84	39.2	83	38.8	5.6
7. Search for social support	22	10.3	129	60.3	63	29.4	5.6
8. Self-control	27	12.6	105	49.1	82	38.3	4.8

Commenting on the data in Table 2, we will pay attention to crucial moments:

- the structure of the personality of the “Big Five personality traits” is characterized by the tendency of the group-wide index “neuroticism” to a high level and a low attachment level; at the same time, indicators of extraversion and self-control are at the lower limit of the norm. In other words, the personal profile of the surveyed men is accentuated, which is determined by diving neuroticism (emotional instability) in combination with a low attachment level (a low indicator reflects the desire to keep a distance, have a separate position, negligence in fulfilling their duties and promises). This result also means that more than 60% of the surveyed men are characterized by coldness and misunderstanding in interpersonal relationships; they are more concerned about their own problems than the problems of others; they are always ready to defend their interests in competition and use all the means available to them;

- the indicator of the overall level of life meaningfulness is average, tending to low. In the structure of meaningful life orientations, the component “locus of control – life” is less pronounced than others, which means the tendency of the surveyed to fatalism; the conviction that their and other people’s life is hard to control; freedom of choice does not exist and it makes no sense to plan for the future;

the share of men with a low overall life meaningfulness level comprises 46.7%;

- the overall level of guilt is average, and its structure is dominated by the “guilt as a state” component; the proportion of men with a high level of this state is significantly higher (about 45%) than the share of men with guilt as a character trait (about 10%). At the same time, the largest share of the entire sample is made up of men with a low level of moral standards (about 50%);

- the surveyed men are characterized by a fairly high level of reflexivity. The proportion of men with a high level of this personality parameter is about 46%, that is, almost every second representative of the sample tries to realize what is happening to him;

- the men prefer coping strategies, such as “escape/avoidance”, although they have nowhere to run (6, 7 stens), and “confrontation” (6, 5 stens). Less often they use a “self-control” strategy (the indicator of this coping strategy tends to a low level).

The correlation analysis of the data shows numerous connections between the studied variables. Coordination within the same methodology is natural and is not given here. Below is the analysis of correlations of the $p \leq 0.01$ significance value of the overall self-actualization level and the personality characteristics we studied (Table 3).

Table 3

Correlation of self-actualization and other personality characteristics found in the sample of mature men first held in a pre-trial detention center

What	With what	r	p
1	2	3	4
Self-actualization (general level)	Meaningfulness of life (life meaning orientation)	0.269	0.000
	Taking responsibility (coping)	-0.234	0.001
	Escape/avoidance (coping)	-0.192	0.005

1	2	3	4
Self-actualization (general level)	Neuroticism (basic personality trait)	-0.371	0.000
	Attachment (basic personality trait)	-0.252	0.000
	Individual measure of reflexivity	-0.316	0.000
	Guilt (general level)	-0.553	0.000

Table 3 reflects close links between the general self-actualization level and all the personality characteristics we study, in particular, life-meaning orientations (meaningfulness of life); coping (taking responsibility and escape/avoidance); basic features of a “normal” personality (neuroticism and attachment); reflexivity; guilt (general level).

Conclusions

The results obtained allow us to make the following conclusions:

1) the main feature of self-actualization of men of mature age, first held in a pre-trial detention center, is the fact that its generalized indicator is at the border of levels, such as “mental and statistical norm” and “self-actualization”. So, the surveyed men are able to include in the process of genuine self-actualization; however, without the help of a psychologist, most of them will not be able to realize it, since they lack flexibility in behavior due to dogmatism. Besides, the share of men with pseudo-self-actualization (5.6%) and a low overall self-actualization level (20.6%) is observed, especially in the components, such as “flexibility of behavior”, “feeling reactivity”, and “time competence”;

2) the surveyed group of men is characterized by the following personality characteristics: in the personality structure, a high neuroticism level is combined with a low attachment level (psychopathological tendencies are observed); the group-wide index of meaningfulness of life tends to low, the men’s tendency to fatalism is noted; the overall level of guilt is average and “guilt as a state” dominates; half of the sample are men with a low level of moral norms and a fairly high reflexivity level (the share of men with a high level is about 46%); “escape/avoidance” or “confrontation” coping strategies are popular, while the “self-control” strategy is less often used;

3) the generalized indicator of self-actualization of the surveyed men is closely related to their personality characteristics, such as meaningfulness of life; coping (“taking responsibility” and “escape/avoidance”); neuroticism and attachment (basic features of a “normal” personality); individual measure of reflexivity; general level of guilt;

4) the practical significance of the results obtained lies in the fact that they show not only the presence of the problem of self-actualization of men of mature age, first held in a pre-trial detention center, but also the possibility of solving it by increasing psychologists’ attention to personality characteristics of those held in pre-trial detention centers, closely related to this mechanism. It will ensure more effective prevention of criminal self-actualization;

5) the problem of self-actualization of a person who has violated the law remains insufficiently studied in penitentiary science (for example, for a clearer delineation of boundaries of the phenomenon under study, it would be interesting to consider self-actualization of the suspected, accused and convicted, depending on the type of crime committed by them or imputed to them: 1 – mercenary crimes; 2 – violent crimes). The described problem is insufficiently solved in practical activities of penitentiary psychologists. Self-actualization and resocialization are interrelated processes. Without the first, the second is impossible. Therefore, it would be advisable to include a self-actualization indicator in the algorithm of the psychologist’s work to determine a convict correction degree [19].

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