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PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS INFLUENCING PERSONAL AUTONOMY AS A KEY FACTOR OF SELF-DETERMINATION

У статті розглядаються психологічні особливості, які можуть впливати на розвиток особистісної автономії. Особистісна автономія розглядається в рамках теорії самодетермінації. Результати дослідження показують, що особистісна автономія співвідноситься з самовираженням, самооцінкою, самопочуттям, психологічною стійкістю та самореалізацією особистості. Але найважливіша особистісна характеристика, що найбільш сильно впливає на розвиток особистісної автономії, - це існування цілі в житті, що дає сенс життю, орієнтацію на життєвому шляху та часовий погляд.

***Ключові слова:** особистісна автономія, теорія самовизначення, психологічні характеристики.*

The article discusses psychological characteristics that can influence development of personal autonomy. Personal autonomy is considered within the self-determination theory. The research results show that personal autonomy correlate with self-expression, self-efficacy, self-attitude, psychological hardiness and self-actualization of an individual. But the most important personal characteristics, influencing most strongly on personal autonomy development is

existence of purpose in life giving meaning to life, orientation and time perspective.

Key words: personal autonomy, self-determination theory, psychological characteristics.

Research relevance. Personal autonomy means an individual's capacity for self-determination or self-governance. Personal autonomy is the capacity to decide for oneself and pursue a course of action in one's life. Conceptions of autonomy in psychology are often connected to conceptions of the nature of Self and its constitutions. The connection between autonomy and a personal ideal at developing one's own Self is examined within the humanistic psychologies of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, who saw the goal of human development as "self-actualization" and "becoming a person," respectively. Understanding autonomy is not simply in explaining how we make decisions, but also the idea of autonomy suggests something about how we identify ourselves, what we identify with [11].

The self-determination theory is centred on the belief that human nature shows persistent positive features, that people repeatedly show efforts, agency and commitment in their lives that the theory calls "inherent growth tendencies". Deci and Ryan claim that there are three essential elements of the theory[10]: 1) humans are inherently proactive with their potential and mastering their inner forces (such as drives and emotions) 2) humans have an inherent tendency toward growth development and integrated functioning 3) optimal development and actions are inherent in humans but they don't happen automatically.

People also have innate psychological needs that are the basis for self-motivation and personality integration. The self-determination theory identifies three innate needs that, if satisfied, allow optimal function and growth: competence, relatedness, autonomy. According to this approach, autonomy means a desire to be causal agents of one's own life and act in harmony with one's

integrated self; however, Deci and Vansteenkiste [10] note this does not mean to be independent of others.

The desire and the need to be independent, to act at own discretion, based on own internal motivation, is arisen and developed not in an empty place. There must be factors of personal development stimulating the need for autonomy. **The purpose of this article** is to determine the psychological factors contributing to development and formation of personal autonomy. *The research subject* is personal autonomy from the standpoint of the self-determination theory. *The research object* is psychological factors influencing personal autonomy.

Status of problem's research.

According to M.M. Pavlyuk [5] autonomy an integrative personal characteristics associated with such structures as self-concept, identity, motivations, the ability to choose, etc. An autonomous individual is characterized by the ability to manage consciously own behaviour according to own views and beliefs, to overcome obstacles, implementing a chosen program of life. Autonomy involves activity, personal initiative in relation to oneself and others.

Personal autonomy is manifested in such personal characteristics as independent goal-setting; awareness of own behaviour; developed reflection; flexibility and creativity of thinking. According to O.A. Sergeeva [7] high personal autonomy is characterized by genuine interest in performed activities, initiative, flexibility of thinking and creativity, orientation on satisfaction from a performed activity; low personal autonomy is characterized by the desire to avoid failures and feelings of guilt, and to receive an external praise and social approval.

G.V.Burmenskaya [2] notes that autonomy is bases on such personal characteristics as competencies and skills, initiative and purpose-setting, arbitrary self-regulation, development and awareness of one's individuality, independence in interpersonal relations, emancipation as opposed to unity and emotional links, the ability to choose and to implement freely own interests.

Every individual has a certain understanding of him/herself, his/her own self-concept, self-image in different life situations in different time periods. In the

course of life, an individual accumulates knowledge about him/herself, this knowledge constitutes a meaningful part of his/her ideas about him/herself. However, such self-knowledge does not leave the individual indifferent: revealed ideas become emotional, they are assessed, becomes more or less stable self-attitude. Self-attitude can be understood as an expression of Self for an individual, as some persistent sense as for own Self. The structure and specificity of an individual's attitude towards own Self affects virtually all aspects of human behaviour, playing an essential role in interpersonal relationships, in setting and achieving goal, in ways of forming and solving crisis situations. That is why self-attitude is also linked with personal autonomy.

The level of personal autonomy, as well as the need for autonomy, increases with personal development, with the growth of faith in oneself, own powers and intellectual abilities, and faith in own ability to overcome difficulties and stresses faced during life [4].

In addition, the notion of self-determination is rather closely related to self-actualization. The concept of self-actualization is synthetic, it includes comprehensive and continuous development of personal creative and spiritual potential, the maximal fulfilment of all personal capabilities, adequate perception of others, the world and own place in it, deep emotions and spiritual life, a high level of mental health and morality . Maslow explicitly defines self-actualization as the desire for self-fulfilment, namely the tendency for an individual to become actualized in what he/she is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming [12]. A self-actualized individual tends to be more independent in his/her orientations, both from internal impulses and from demands of others. Such a person searches for self-support and independence from others.

Based on the foregoing, we believe that it will be interesting and relevant to compare personal autonomy with such personal characteristics as: self-attitude, self-efficacy and psychological hardiness, self-actualization.

Research methods and the researched sample.

To determine personal autonomy, we used Sheldon's Self-Determination Scale in Osin's modification [13] with corrections and additions on the base of approbation with Russian-speaking samples. The Self-Determination Scale measures an individual's subjective experience to how he/she determines the course of his/her own life and how much his/her life corresponds to his/her will. The scale includes two indicators scales: personal autonomy and self-expression. On the basis of our tasks, the autonomy indicator was interesting to us. The autonomy indicator measures an individuals' confidence in opportunities to have and make chooses in his/her life, defining the course of own life. People with high points experience life as controlled by them, feel that they themselves are able to choose the direction of their own lives and make decisions determining its course; in this way, they take responsibility for the course of their own lives. People with low scores, by contrast, feel that their life is determined not so much by their own desires and efforts, but by external factors; they are experiencing a lack of choice. This experience may reflect the true situation (when circumstances force an individual to act as he/she does not want), but may be a hidden form of removal of responsibility for their own lives.

To determine the psychological factors affecting autonomy, we used the following tests: the Test of Meaningful Life Orientation of O. L. Leontiev, which is the adapted version of Purpose-in-Life Test of James Krambo and Leonard Maholik [9]; Test-Questionnaire of Self-Attitude of V.V. Stolyn, S.R. Panteleyev [8]; Self-Efficacy Scale proposed by R. Schwarzer and M. Jerusalem and adapted by V.G. Romek [6], S. Maddy's Hardiness Scale in adaptation of D.A. Leontiev, Ye.I. Raskasova [3], the Self-Actualization Test (CAT), which represents the adaptation of Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory [1].

In total, 150 respondents - students of Kyiv universities participated in the research.

Research results

At the first stage of statistical data processing, correlations were identified between personal autonomy and other personal characteristics. The obtained results are shown in the Tables 1-5.

Table 1

Correlations between personal autonomy and Leontiev's Test of Meaningful Life Orientation.

		General purpose in life	Life goals	Life process	Life results	Locus of control -Self	Locus of control - life
Personal autonomy	Pearson correlation	,611**	,685**	,542**	,588**	,647**	,632**
	α (2-sides)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000

Note: ** - there is a correlation at the reliable level of significance $\alpha \leq 0,01$; * - there is a correlation at the reliable level of significance $\alpha \leq 0.05$

So, all indicators of the meaningful life orientations, the general purpose, as well as partial indicators, correlate quite strongly with personal autonomy at statistically significant levels. The values of these correlations are the highest among all correlations, calculated within our research. Personal autonomy strongly depends on existence of meaningful life purposes.

Table 2

Correlations between personal autonomy and self-expression in Sheldon's Self-Determination Scale adapted by E.Osin, self-efficacy indicator proposed by R. Schwarzer and M. Jerusalem and adapted by V.G. Romek

		Self-expression	Self-Efficacy
Personal autonomy	Pearson correlation	,356*	,428**
	α (2-sides)	,011	,002

Note: see note to Table 1

There are statistically significant correlations between personal autonomy and the self-expression and self-efficacy indicators, but their values are not high, rather average.

Table 3

Correlations between personal autonomy and the indicators of the Test-Questionnaire of Self-Attitude of V.V. Stolyn, S.R. Panteleyev

		General self-attitude	Self-respect	Auto-sympathy	Expected attitude of others	Self-interests	Self-assurance	Attitude of others	Self-acceptance	Self-management	Self-blaming	Interest in oneself
Personal autonomy	Pearson correlation	,508**	,338*	,314*	,198	,125	,530**	,076	,527**	,007	-,125	,121
	α (2-sides)	,000	,016	,027	,168	,386	,000	,602	,000	,960	,389	,403

Note: see note to Table 1

At for the self-attitude test, personal autonomy correlates statistically significantly with the following indicators of self-attitude: general self-attitude, self-respect, auto-sympathy, self-assurance and self-acceptance. Not all indicators have influence on personal autonomy, but general positive attitude to Self influence on personal autonomy rather high.

Table 4

Correlations between personal autonomy and the indicators of Maddy's Hardiness Survey in adaptation of D.A. Leontiev, Ye.I. Raskasova

		Control	Commitment	Challenge	General hardiness
Personal autonomy	Pearson correlation	,402**	,394**	,463**	,446**
	α (2-sides)	,004	,005	,001	,001

Note: see note to Table 1

There are statistically significant correlations between personal autonomy and the indicators of Maddy's Hardiness Survey, the values of these correlations are average.

Table 4

Correlations between personal autonomy and the indicators of the Self-Actualization Test

		Time Competence	Inner-Directed	Self-Actualizing Value	Existentiality	Feeling Reactivity	Spontaneity	Self-Regard	Self-Acceptance	Nature of Man-Constructive	Synergy	Acceptance of Aggression	Capacity for Intimate Contact	Cognitive needs	Creativity
Personal autonomy	Pearson correlation	,315*	,305*	,460**	,211	,064	,206	,370**	,160	,097	,032	,252	,285*	,377**	,331*
	α (2-sides)	,026	,031	,001	,142	,658	,151	,008	,266	,504	,824	,077	,045	,007	,019

Note: see note to Table 1

At for the self-actualization test, the picture is as follows: personal autonomy correlates significantly with the following SAT indicators: time competence, inner-directed, self-actualizing value, self-regard, capacity for intimate contact, cognitive needs, creativity. The strongest correlation is observed for self-actualising value.

So these results show that personal autonomy correlates with all integrative indicators of the proposed tests and with the most indicators that, by their nature, are the components of the integrative indicators.

At the second stage of statistical data processing, we determined two groups of the respondents. The first group included the respondents showed high personal autonomy, and the second one did the respondents showed low personal autonomy. We determined the averages values of the examined generalised psychological characteristics (general purpose-in-life, self-expression, self-efficiency, general self-attitude, general psychological hardiness) shown by these groups and compared them with corresponding characteristics calculated for the total sample. The Fig. 1-6 shows the obtained results.

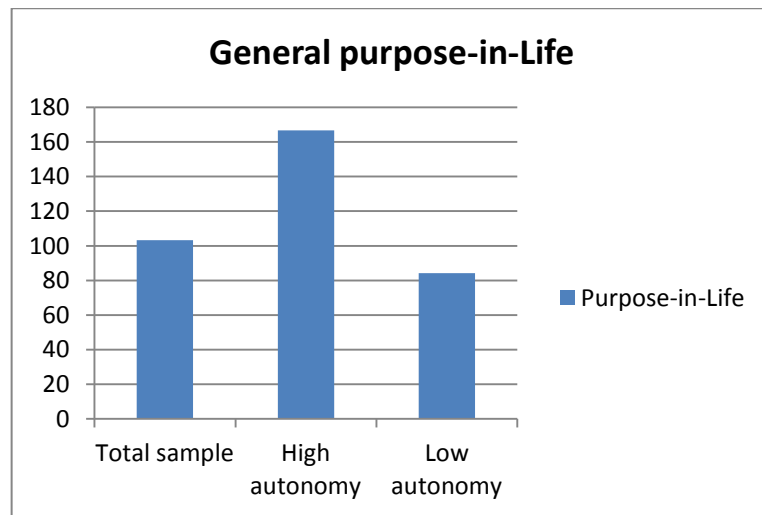


Fig. 1 Average values of “general purpose-in-life” indicator for the total sample and the selected groups.

General purpose-in-life reflects how important a goal that an individual has in his/her life, to what extent he/she considers his/her life is full and interesting, and to what extent he/she is satisfied with already achieved results. The average value of this indicator for the group with high autonomy is much higher than that of the total sample and that of the group with low autonomy.

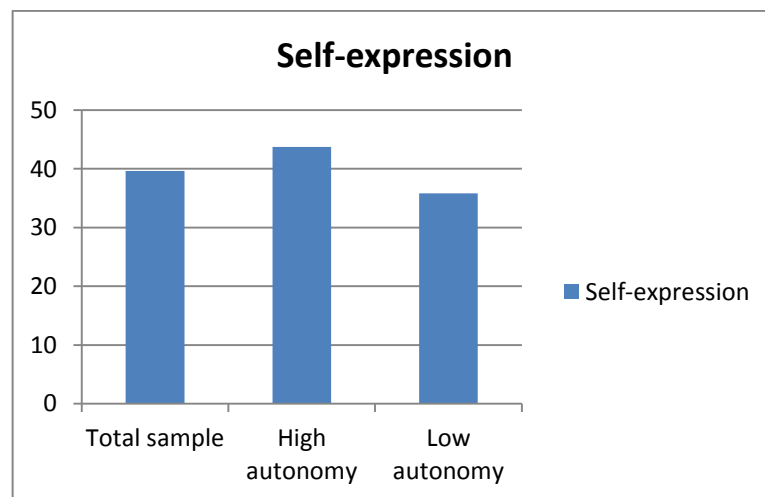


Fig. 2 Average values of “self-expression” indicator for the total sample and the selected groups.

Self-expression shows how much an individual is experiencing own life as corresponding to own desires, needs and values. Being self-expressed means that people around will see an individual’s spirit and true character; they will see the totality of who the person is. And sharing of one’s “self” fully is the ultimate in generosity and is vital for peace, happiness and self-fulfilment.

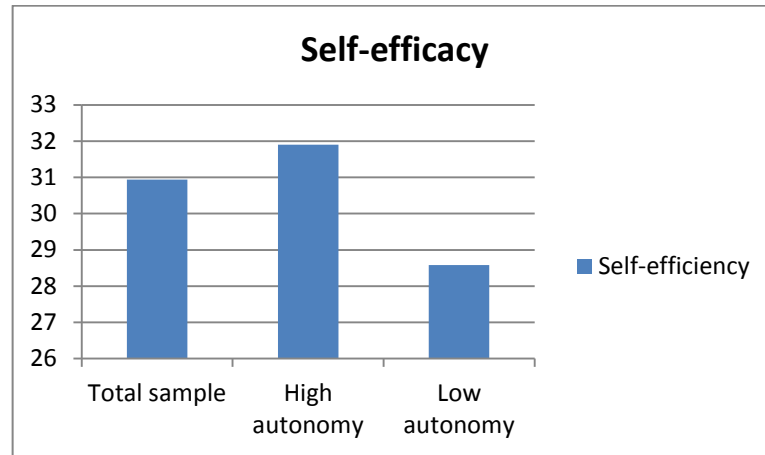


Fig. 3 Average values of “self-efficacy” indicator for the total sample and the selected groups.

Self-efficacy reflects an individual’s faith in the fact that he/she is able to behave in such a way that it will lead to the desired results (success). Self-efficacy determines whether an individual will be able to exhibit coping behaviour and how long effort will be sustained in the face of obstacles. Individuals who have high self-efficacy will exert sufficient effort that, if well executed, leads to successful outcomes, whereas those with low self-efficacy are likely to cease effort early and fail. The average value of this indicator for the group with low autonomy is much lower than that of the total sample and that of the group with high autonomy.

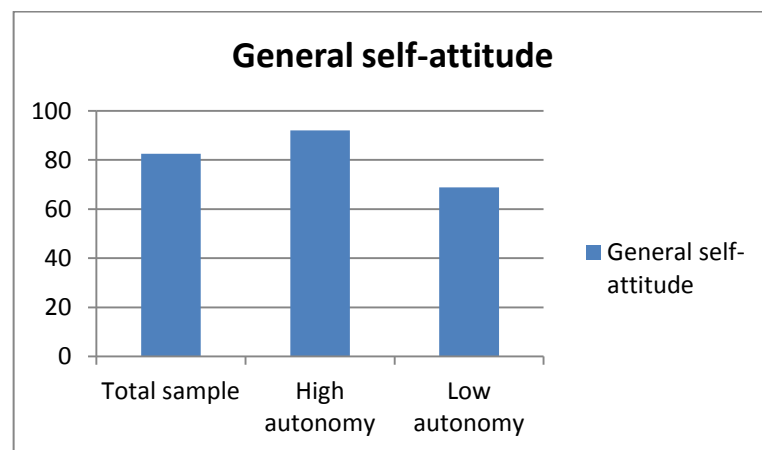


Fig. 3 Average values of “general self-attitude” indicator for the total sample and the selected groups.

This indicator measures an individual’s integral sense of "for" or "against" Self. Self-attitude reflects an individual's overall subjective emotional evaluation of

his or her own worth. People with a healthy level of self-attitude firmly believe in certain values and principles, and are ready to defend, are able to act according to what they think to be the best choice, consider themselves equal in dignity to others.

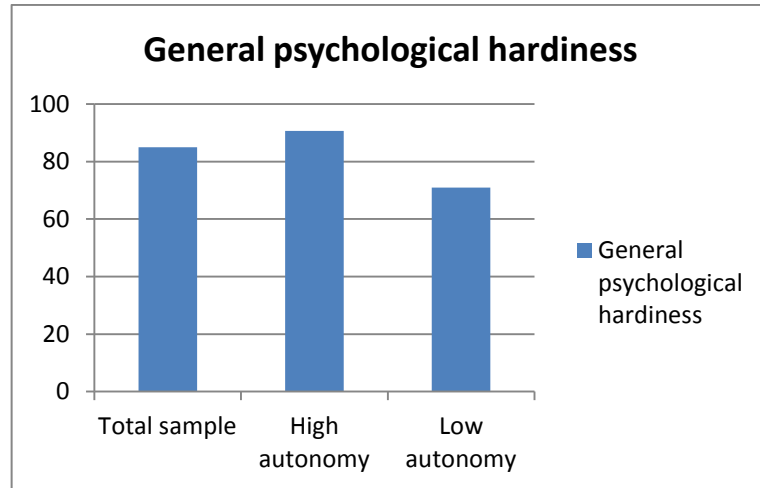


Fig. 4 Average values of “general psychological hardiness” indicator for the total sample and the selected groups.

This indicator describes a system of beliefs about oneself, about the world, about relationships with the world and is a disposition of components: involvement, control, acceptance of risk. High psychological hardiness impede emergence of internal stress in stressful situations through hardy coping with stress and perceiving them as less significant.

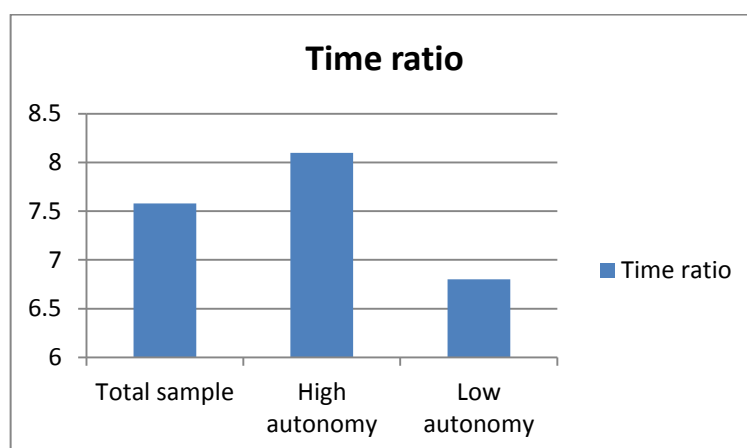


Fig. 5 Average values of “time ratio” indicator for the total sample and the selected groups

This indicator shows the degree to which an individual identifies with the present. Time Incompetence/Time Competence - measures whether time

orientation is primarily in the present or the past and/or future. The average value of this indicator for the group with low autonomy is much lower than that of the total sample and that of the group with high autonomy.

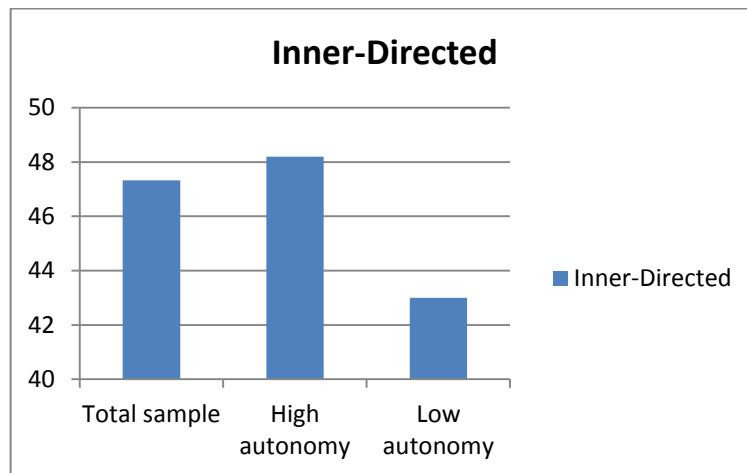


Fig. 6 Average values of “inner directed” indicator for the total sample and the selected groups

Inner-Directed indicator shows the degree to which an individual is independent and self-supportive. Other-Directed individuals tend to be dependent, whereas individuals showing high results with Inner-Directed indicator tend to be self-willed. The average value of this indicator for the group with low autonomy is much lower than that of the total sample and that of the group with high autonomy.

Average values of all examined indicators for the group with high autonomy are higher than that of the total sample. The group with low autonomy showed the lowest results. But this result is quite obvious.

It is more interesting to examine differences between averaged indicators shown by the total sample and the corresponding indicators of two selected groups. For the indicators: self-efficacy, general self-attitude, general psychological hardiness, time ratio and inner-directed, such differences between the total sample and the group with low autonomy is larger than that between the total sample and the group with high autonomy. It means that poor development of these psychological characteristic impede development of personal autonomy. In contrast, for general purpose-in life, the difference of average values between the total sample and the group with high autonomy is larger than that between the total

sample and the group with low autonomy. In this case we can tell that existence of life goals support personal autonomy.

Conclusions.

The analyzed results show that personal autonomy depends on self-efficacy, self-attitude, psychological hardiness, self-identification with the present and self-will. It means that lack of believe in own ability to achieve desired results, low tolerance to stress, tendencies to reject of Self, to be dependent on external influences, to look into the past instead of believe in the present forces can hinder development of personal autonomy. But the most important personal characteristics supporting personal autonomy is existence of a purpose in life. If an individual has life purposes for the future, giving meaning to his/her life, orientation and time perspective, if he/she is convicted in own ability to control own life freely, to make decisions and to put them into action, it he/she believes that he/she has sufficient freedom of choice to build own life in accordance with own goals, tasks and ideas, all these qualities make the individual to put off obedience or laziness and to start own journey toward the desired goal even through life obstacles and stresses. And such a way is a way to real personal autonomy.

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Abstract

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