

Ideas of Psychotherapy of People of Different Age Groups in Modern Society

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Abstract— The article is devoted to an important issue of how much age influences a general perception of psychotherapy in the modern information-oriented society. The article proves the point of view that emotions coming together with information shape perception to the most part. The main points of the research conducted include the results and their analysis of an associative experiment (stimulus words like “psychologist”, “psychotherapist”, “psychotherapy”); a questionnaire survey “Your Attitude towards Psychotherapy”; a projective technique “Visiting a Psychotherapist”; Eysenck Personality Questionnaire. The authors of the research come to the conclusion that in modern society people of the age group of 36–60 years old are less aware of ways of getting psychotherapeutical assistance and consulting a qualified therapist if compared with a younger generation; they are prone to stereotypes concerning psychotherapy and disapprove of it, do not believe in such professionals’ help.

Keywords— *perception; psychologist; psychotherapist; age*

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no unified idea in modern society why people may need psychology, psychotherapy, or visiting a psychotherapist [1, 2, 3, 4]. For instance, in times of the Soviet Union the image of psychotherapy was confined to hypnosis, autogenic training and “alcohol abuse hypnosis”, a therapist was endowed with an ability to see people through. Meanwhile, bookstore shelves nowadays are packed with both home manuals and those in translations of foreign authors on various systems of health improvement including psychological health; mass media provide the society with various information on this topic, as well [5, 6, 7]. The number of people who finally decide to turn to a specialist – psychotherapist, psychoanalyst, and psychologist – is growing, as well as the number of such professionals. According to the data provided by the Analytical Epidemiology Laboratory of the National Medical Research Center on Psychiatry and Addictions named after V.P. Serbskiy, the number of psychiatrists affiliated in state-run clinics, research and academic institutions is over 16 thousand people, and the ratio is 0,55 of a specialist per every 10 thousand of people; according to professional associations, the number of psychologists is over 30 thousand people nation-wide. A great amount of them, both well-qualified and phoney, offer their cure for dealing with practically any issue connected with obtaining inward peace and well-being. Thus,

the seeming abundance inevitably leads to frustration. Besides, the word root “psycho-” causes suspicion and steady rejection.

This brought us to the idea of conducting a research in order to study the perception of psychotherapy by people belonging to various age groups.

The hypothesis of the research is that people’s ideas of psychotherapy differ and are specific for different age groups.

While analyzing references, there was found out that current understanding of the term “perception” was shaped in general by the middle of the XX century, and it is understood as subjective images of the objectively existing entity that are recreated by memory (memory perceptions) or created by imagination (creative images), which appear when something material that created those images does not directly affect an individual’s sensory organs [8, 9, 10, 11, 12]. That said, the process of specifying, clarifying, conveying, incorporating fundamental ideas of the 1st half of the XX century into new theoretical contexts has been taking place up to now. From this perspective, the works by E.V. Ilienkov, B.M. Teplov, L.Yu. Tikhomirov, A.V. Basov, A.A. Gostev, E.L. Agaeva, A.V. Brushlinskiy, L.M. Gurova, Yu.B. Gippenreiter, R.S. Nemov, E.L. Porotskaya, V.P. Zinchenko, A.G. Ruzskaya, P.A. Rudik, E.A. Klimov, L.A. Vehger, O.M. Diachenko, L.F. Obukhova, A.V. Petrovskiy are of most interest to the topic at question.

The essential factors for shaping perceptions are processes of personality socialization, emotions, spontaneous concepts, peculiarities of up-bringing and psychic development, and mass media [13, 14, 15]. It is important to pay attention to the emotional factor of shaping perceptions because presumably it is emotions that determine this process to the most part, since they come together with the information flow [16, 17].

The empirical research was carried out with the help of the following set of methods:

- an associative experiment, stimulus words “psychologist”, “psychotherapist”, “psychotherapy”, a questionnaire survey “Your Attitude Towards Psychotherapy”, a projective technique “Visiting a Psychotherapist” were employed with the aim to find out people’s perceptions of psychotherapy and their attitude to visiting a therapist and a psychologist, as well as whether those surveyed were able to differentiate between a psychologist and a psychotherapist [18];

- the “EPI” Eysenck Personality Questionnaire designed by H.J. Eysenck, which analyzes the components of extraversion, introversion and neuroticism as basic personality dimensions.

Those surveyed were citizens of different parts of Russia who were grouped according to their age:

Group 1— people who are 20-35 years old;

Group 2— who are 36-58 years old.

The results of the experiment are as follows.

The associative experiment showed that those surveyed of Group 1:

- have a prevailing association of “help” (65%), “a doctor” (25%), “psycho” (10%) in their perception with the stimulus word “psychologist”. These data reflect the majority understands that a psychotherapist’s work is devoted to helping people, but they do not realize that a psychologist is not a doctor who prescribes pharmaceutical treatment;

- have a direct correlation between the stimulus “psychotherapist” and a health care facility, pharmaceutical prescriptions, a hospital since the majority of those surveyed expressed the association with “a doctor” (65%), “treatment” (30%), “medicines” (5%);

- have a prevailing association of “treatment” (70%), “help” (18%), “procedure and neuroinduction” (12%) with the stimulus word “psychotherapy”. Such associations give a right to conclude that those surveyed have a mature understanding of psychotherapy.

The associative experiment showed that those surveyed of Group 2:

- have a prevailing association of “a doctor” (15%), “psycho” (85%) in their perception with the stimulus word “psychologist”. Those surveyed of the older age have a negative stereotyped perception of a psychologist, a false understanding of a psychologist’s professional activity;

- have a prevailing association of “a doctor” (77%), as well as “treats the soul for money”, “someone who can use some techniques other than talking”. Those surveyed have a true perception of these specialists’ activities but their helping people is based on interested motives;

- have an association of “treatment” (69%) and “rest and health” (23%). Those respondents deduced their understanding of psychotherapy from a medical care approach [19].

The results of the associative experiment and their comparison prove that the perception of a psychologist and psychotherapy are false among the respondents. Moreover, those surveyed in Group 2 reveal a negative attitude towards these specialists’ activities, and their understanding is stereotype-based ($U_{\text{emp.}} = 170$, with $p < 0,05$).

According to the data obtained through the questionnaire survey “Your Attitude Towards Psychotherapy” in both groups, the conclusions are as follows:

- the majority of those surveyed never visited a psychotherapist; in their perception the respondents do not relate to psychotherapy, it can happen to somebody else but not them;

- collaboration with a psychotherapist helps those surveyed with a positive attitude towards this professional activities;

- those surveyed in Group 1 have a clear understanding of a psychotherapist’s professional activities; those surveyed in Group 2 do not make difference between a psychotherapist’s and a psychologist’s professional activities.

Thus, the younger respondents have a better understanding of psychotherapy; their perception expresses a positive attitude to specialists’ activities. Those surveyed of an older age express a negative attitude towards psychotherapy and reject any possibility for themselves to turn to such specialists.

The analysis of the projective technique’s results supports the above-mentioned data, such as:

- the majority of those surveyed in Group 1 have a mature holistic definite perception of a visit to a psychotherapist; they view such a visit as a conversation which is corroborated by their clear images of a desk, a chair, a client and a therapist occupying those pieces of furniture;

- those surveyed in Group 2 view a visit to a psychotherapist as a tableful with two people in a conversation while drinking alcohol; this perception proves to be stereotype-based.

The results of the survey performed with the help of the “EPI” Eysenck Personality Questionnaire by H.J. Eysenck showed that in both groups there prevailed introverts, which means those surveyed are level-headed, emotionally stable people who make their decisions reasonably and care about consequences. To the most part those surveyed are a phlegmatic type, which indicates consistent personal principles, opinions and perceptions [20].

The results obtained through the correlation analysis revealed that creating an idea of something is greatly connected to the personality emotions. For instance, the respondents’ emotions influenced their perception of psychotherapy; existing stereotypes and no personal interest in a therapist’s activities lead to false perceptions.

CONCLUSION

Summing up the results of the research, it is important to note that people of different age groups have different perceptions of psychotherapy. Younger people of 20 to 35 years of age are mobile, have a positive attitude towards new trends, have no fear of visiting a therapist and realize that a specialist can truly help them. People of the age group of 36 to 60 years old are prone to stereotypes in their perceptions, reject psychotherapy and disapprove of it, do not believe in such professionals’ help.

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