SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE EMOTIONAL-MOTIVATIONAL STRUCTURE IN EARLY-CAREER HELPERS

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Abstract: This study attempts to offer answers to the question of how graduate and early-career (first five years after graduation) view their career prospects, and respectively, what practicing the profession feels like for them. We attempted to uncover the emotional foundations of the ways attitudes towards the future – desires, fears and the motivational structure – develop.

This research is being done in order for the institutes training helper professionals to acknowledge the difficulties in starting a career and for them to devote attention to career socialization during training. This requires familiarity with the disposition and the affective-motivational structure of graduate and early-career helpers. One must know the root of these hardships and the parts of the self that require support.

The results of our research show that the instability index is especially high in the case of helper professionals at the beginning of their career; there are often mixed feelings and high anxiety with regard to the profession. Abandonment, lack of recognition and a sense of not belonging are all characteristic of the emotional state in which early-career helpers find themselves.

It seems necessary for the institutes providing training to effect changes in organization and content that would make it possible, apart from optimal intellectual development, that as many students as possible also grow emotionally and socially; this would make them suited for fulfilling their societal responsibilities and at the same time allow them to live in balance with themselves and their environment.

Keywords: career socialization, affective-motivational structure, sense of perspective.

Description of the research

The worries encountered at the beginning of the career and the negative dispositions associated with this are overly taxing to young professionals; it takes up creative energies and makes the beginnings of a career more difficult (Albert-Lőrincz, Ludányi, 2014).

Institutes training helper professionals must acknowledge the difficulties in starting a career and should devote attention to career socialization during training. This requires familiarity with the disposition and the affective-motivational structure of graduates and early-career helpers. One must know the root of these hardships and the parts of the self that require support.

This study attempts to offer answers to the question of how newly graduated (first five years in the field) helpers view their career prospects, and respectively, what practicing the profession feels like for them. We attempted to uncover the psychological foundations of the ways attitudes towards the future – desires, fears and the motivational structure – develop.

Surveys have been done in Oradea, Cluj-Napoca and Târgu Mureș. We have asked 182 young (35 years at most) helper professionals (psychologists, social workers, social pedagogues) to answer the future-themed questions in the Metamorphosis test as well as the questions of the Woodworth questionnaire. At the same time, we have also asked two hundred non-helper young professionals to answer the Woodworth questions. This data was needed for comparison (control group).
The Woodworth questionnaire measures the most important emotional factors that play a part in adjustment; it shows, for instance, the degree of sensitivity in the individual as well as their state of safety and stability. With the Metamorphosis\(^1\) test, one can quickly obtain information about the motivational and symbol structure in the individual that offer a glimpse of the emotional and rational disposition as well as the unconscious desires and fears of the person in question. It signals the level of self-fulfillment and the life processes into which the individual’s motivations can be turned.

We begin with the hypothesis that careers do not begin smoothly; there is too much anxiety and insecurity about the future. These frustrations and impositions upset the balance in the affective domain of personality. The disharmony inherent in affectivity has a negative influence on thoughts and decisions regarding the future. This issue is especially burdensome to those in the helper profession, since aside from their personal lives, they also have to take responsibility for their clients.

The characteristics of the affective domain of personality based on the results of the Woodworth questionnaire

The present, as a unit of experience, condenses uniquely in the affective domain of personality. Emotions express the subjective state of the individual experiencing them, showing how events in the outside world affect them as well as reflecting the attitude the individual has towards the inner activity. The idiosyncrasies of the affective dimension are, for the most part, what determine the way the individual will relate to their environment and themselves. Examining the characteristics of emotional factors is important for becoming acquainted with the capacity for adaptation.

The Woodworth questionnaire is used to study affectivity. It investigates eight factors of crucial significance with regard to adjustment. These are the following: hyperemotivity, psychastenia, a tendency towards introversion, depressive tendencies, paranoid tendencies, instability, impulsiveness, and antisocial tendencies. The table below shows the results of helper professionals (N=182) and the control group (N=200).

The characteristics of the affective domain of personality in early-career professionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average value</th>
<th>Hyperemotivity</th>
<th>Psychastenia</th>
<th>Introversion</th>
<th>Paranoid tendencies</th>
<th>Depressive tendencies</th>
<th>Impulsiveness</th>
<th>Instability</th>
<th>Antisocial tendency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>helper</td>
<td>48.57</td>
<td>58.28</td>
<td>40.71</td>
<td>81.42</td>
<td>65.85</td>
<td>102.85</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control</td>
<td>65.85</td>
<td>127.81</td>
<td>50.23</td>
<td>117.41</td>
<td>113.00</td>
<td>88.73</td>
<td>111.05</td>
<td>44.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) For a description of the test: Ferenc Mérei, Ferenc Szakács (eds.), Pszichodiagnosztikai vademecum, II. személyiségtesztek [Psychodiagnostic vade mecum, Personality Tests II], part 3., 99-163
The average scores in the table are in the area of balanced adjustment. (Subjects are at risk at scores above 130, and scores above 180 signify pathology.)

The research results show that the characteristics of the emotional life of helper professionals are different from the characteristics of the control subjects, who have different fields of work. The differences that are significant for us are those that point to the fact that helper professionals do not possess adequate emotional balance. High impulsiveness (102.85) and instability (130) may constitute obstacles in practicing the profession, since in their case, their own personality is used as a working tool. Throughout handling their cases, they must be able to withstand pressure, while treating the patient’s problems with appropriate detachment and experiencing transference and countertransference requires emotional maturity and equilibrium. We know from the preliminary interviews with the persons examined that throughout the time spent at university as well as at the beginning of their career, they have experienced more negative emotions than fulfillment while working with clients. Next to theoretical training, here are no skills that provide safety and the capacity for an emotional involvement to an adequate degree. This is why everyday tension is exacerbated by frustration arising from the profession in helpers. The ten most frequent negative emotions: insecurity, pity, worry, pressure, anxiety, puzzlement, disappointment, pain, being fed up, powerlessness. These emotions leave a trace in the helpers’ emotional world, especially at the beginning of their careers, when – lacking adequate supervision – they are more burdened by the problems of their clients than later, when they learn emotional detachment and the ability to see objectively.

The situation is made even more difficult by the fact that it is difficult to obtain a position as a helper professional, and both the wages and the societal prestige accompanying the profession are low.

Based on the statements above, we consider it important to study the emotional and motivational characteristics of early-career helpers.

Based on the data contained in Table 1 – which illustrates the comparison between the two categories of profession (helper – other) –, it is worth analyzing what emotional feature is displayed by the affective and motivational domain of personality in helpers.

![Fig.1. The characteristics of the affective domain of personality in early-career professionals](image)

The harmony of personality would require that there be adequate proportion between these emotional factors and that all of these take part in developing emotional balance to an adequate degree. The tolerance, vulnerability, capacity for self-fulfillment, adequacy of
reactions, in other words, the maturity and capacity for adjustment of the person all depend on these. This is the harmony missing in the case of helpers, as we can see on Figure 1.

Our investigation also reveals that different affective factors do not equally take part in establishing the affective domain of personality. The disparity between proportions is due to the instability (130) and impulsiveness (102.85) indexes being too high. These two characteristics leave a mark on the personalities of early-career professionals and weaken their self-control. The reactions of the individual are less considered; they become spontaneous and increasingly driven by emotion. Impatience is common; concentration, resilience and focusing on goals become difficult. Imbalance shows primarily in their mood; positive and negative moods alternate quickly, and the personality becomes increasingly vulnerable with the lack of balance – we have found during the interviews.

Our previous investigations prove that a correlation can be shown between emotional balance and the following three characteristics: contentment ($r=0.83$), confidence with regard to the future ($r=0.78$) as well as a sense of control ($r=0.89$). Young people who are content and are able to influence their lives hope for the best from the future. Otherwise, the basic mood is more oppressive, and ambivalence can often be seen, in which case the opposite emotions are present in concert.

Persons with high instability experience life issues in the extreme because their vegetative nervous system is more volatile. Instead of looking for solutions, they often daydream, and they become separated from their problem in thought and demeanor. They choose a solution that focuses on emotion rather than the problem itself. They tend to perceive circumstances as being antagonistic and threatening to their person; their expectations are low and negative. Sustained negative expectations lead to a negative self-image, which is often accompanied by negative emotions. Negative emotions already present give rise to negative interpretations. This is the reason they consider situations to be threatening.

Under the effects of repeated and escalating instability, vulnerability increases, and this can lead to overestimations and paranoid misconceptions. In our case, the score of paranoid tendencies is 81.42, which is below the scores in the control group.

The psychastenia measured (58.28) impedes balanced adjustment and the emergence of youthful vitality. Insecurity and anxiety is taxing; it suppresses much energy, and this can account for the state of weakness.

Oversensitivity, which represents strong and frequent emotional responses as well as a disruption in the balance of sthenic and asthenic emotions, is no higher than the average values in the age group with a score of 48.57.

With regard to the tendency for introversion, young helpers are not at risk at a score of 40.71. In directing the self, they are adequately aware of the stimuli in their environment.

The depression index is 65.85, which suggests that helper professionals are less despondent than the control group (113.00); they are able to better tackle indisposition.

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The antisocial index value (26) is the lowest of all other indexes, which is only natural since we are talking about young helper professionals.

Consequently, we can say that impulsiveness, instability and the insecurity and anxiety associated with these cause the present to suppress too much of their energy. The struggle against everyday problems may hold them back from preparing for the future in a positive manner and from developing creative plans for tomorrow.

The characteristics of the motivational structure in young helper professionals as seen in Metamorphosis categories concerned with the future

3.1. Types of themes identified using the Metamorphosis test

Knowing one’s personality requires revealing the source of psychological energies and the particular ways that these function. Psychological energy functions as an interior stimulus and can be placed into the category of motivation. Its role is to signal diffuse, inner activation or the disruption of psychological or physiological balance, the actuation or cessation of actions and the self-regulation of behavior. The motivational structure of the person is made up of needs, impulses, compulsions, intentions, themes, values and desires. All these are reflected in the disposition of the person towards the future.

Motivation materializes as emotion. It organizes cognitive processes and it influences the tendencies for action in the future. Motivation must be the foundation of internal homeostasis and must ensure the immutability of the inner environment.

Psychological energy is the basis for all types of activity, but “its quality trait is given by deep-seated need” (Csirszka 1993, 70). Because of this, it is important to know what the motivational elements that govern the psychological functions of young early-career professionals are like.

Themes stem from needs; their role is to energize and to direct. Themes are the central elements of motivation as a collective notion. Their study is important for understanding the psychological reactions of the person.

Our investigation – our identification and counter-identification with the buzzwords of the test as well as their justification – made it possible to study motivation on a symbolic level. Because of the volume constraints in the study, we shall dispense with presenting the projections and will only expand on the types of themes.

Jacqueline Royer (as quoted by Szönyi Magda, 1982) differentiates five motivational types behind the transformations. These are the following: A= causing activity, an action targeting the environment, Q= expressing quality or a trait, M= deflecting the cause of motivation on the circumstances of life, N= narcissistic and R= rational motivation, while I= indifference, the direction of action is impossible to ascertain. Table II shows motivational types gleaned during the investigation. The themes (reasons for choices) explaining the imaginary transformations (identifications and counter-identifications) in administering the Metamorphosis test served as the basis for this synopsis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational types</th>
<th>Table II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Frequency of occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q= expressing</td>
<td>35.50 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
quality or a trait | in moral values. It points to responsibility or may arise from a superiority complex, an inferiority complex or an authority complex.

A= causing activity, an action targeting the environment | 25.11 % | It conceals reactive behavior. In our case, it is mostly receptive, geared towards receiving: it expects well-being and quality from its environment. At the same time, it is also emanative, capable of giving: with regard to care and concern.

M= deflecting the cause of motivation on the circumstances of life, the reason for the answer is outside itself | 19.22 % | It reveals dependence and passivity. Abandonment, overprotection, it feeds off a sense of castration. Characterized to a certain extent by conformation and sociability.

N= narcissistic | 17.98 % | Focused on itself. The cause for action is egocentric.

R= rational pronouncements | 2.20 % | The ethical-rational justifications of the superego direct decisions.

A and Q type themes are shown to be most common. Royer also makes mention of this combination. On the level of behavior, the AQ combination may denote resistance, concerns regarding itself, activity directed towards the environment, dependence and egocentricity.

We can see themes concerning the circumstances of life (19.22%) and narcissistic theme (17.98%) to a degree similar to the compulsion for actions directed towards the environment (25.11%). The frequency of explanations based on rational clichés is almost insignificant (2.2%). There are no significant differences between the second, third and fourth degrees on the scale of incidence; the themes occur to roughly the same extent, which may lead to a clash of themes and can disrupt emotional balance, resulting in the instability of the person. This was also supported by the Woodworth questionnaire, which brought to the surface the imbalance in the affective domain of personality in early-career professionals. The highest scores were attained by instability and impulsiveness.

The types of themes whose incidence is too high (over 20%) suppress mental energy and may lead to the development of complexes.

3.2. Complexes, spheres of needs and the values influencing the psychological energies of early-career young professionals

Too many desires going unfulfilled or too many rejections straddle the personality under the guise of compulsions and may lead to complexes. Groups of conceptions intertwined with unpleasant emotional content that has been ejected from the conscious but still affect the psyche are called complexes.

Royer (as quoted by Szőnyi Magda, 1982) managed to identify eleven types of complexes using the Metamorphosis. In our case, the analysis of the symbols and themes revealed three types of complexes.

❖ Abandonment: the signs pointing to it can be found, on the one hand, among the symbols (house, bridge, grass, ship, tunnel, weed), and on the other hand, the themes (defend, offer sanctuary, loneliness, stamp out, powerless, defenseless, to be big and strong, to be valuable and unique, to serve others, to be useful) listed.
The authority complex is what comes to mind in connection with the following symbols: statue, beauty, theater, pyramid, church etc. Among its themes are the justifications of being beautiful, useful, appreciated, excellent and admired.

A complex of inferiority is apparent from grandiose buildings, the sequoias, the lighthouse, tunnel, as well as the following themes: to grow, high, radiant, to be at the forefront, to fall, etc.

Complexes suppress psychological energy, and the young person is unable to concentrate on their life task. As to emotions, abandonment, lack of recognition and a sense of not belonging are all characteristic of the emotional state in which early-career helpers find themselves.

-If we examine themes not only from the point of view of occurrence but also subject them to content analysis, the person’s sphere of needs becomes apparent. Needs also show the values which govern the life of the individual. In order to identify them, we once again called on Royer’s categories. We managed to identify three dominant needs.

An ethical need is suggested by the fact that the answers of the persons examined often feature paired opposites, for example love-hate, usefulness-uselessness, good-evil, tenderness-aggression, generosity-envy.

Needs to overcome manifest in the presence of such themes as usefulness-uselessness, cleverness-stupidity, vigorousness-weakness, dexterity-clumsiness, strength-feebleness, toughness-brittleness, courage-cowardice, beauty-ugliness, lifeless-alive, etc.

A desire for independence can be construed from the following pairs of words: motion-stillness, confinement-freedom, flying-sinking, etc.

The content analysis of the transformations and their justifications also revealed the values which govern how the early-career professionals lead their lives. We shall classify these values based on the structural categories developed by János Csirszka (1993).

Basic values: knowledge, reason, usefulness, beauty, harmony etc.

Vital values: health, movement, closeness to nature, strength, pleasant, life, happiness, comfort, pleasure etc.

Social values: love, community, recognition, success, striving for goodness, freedom, independence, safety etc.

It can be seen that the categories of values do not equally take part in the motivational structure. Figure 5 illustrates that there is a discrepancy in the proportion between the values obtained. The most common themes had vital values (56.35%) as their underlying values, followed by social values (25.8%) and finally basic values (17.85%).

![Bar chart showing proportions of values](image)
Analyzing the motivational structure of young helper professionals has revealed that their behavior is governed primarily by vital values: the desire for a problem-free, pleasant and healthy life filled with joy. The sphere of needs shifts towards morality, independence and the desire to overcome, which direct attention mostly towards the outside world. First among their aspirations is the desire for a suitable environment, for a pleasant ambiance and experiencing recognition, usefulness and freedom. We receive few clues as to whether inner work, personal development and the cultivation of creative attitudes and behaviors concern them at all. They wish to achieve social conformity through the idealistic embellishment of the physical and social environment and by projecting positive fantasies on it. They prefer solutions focusing on emotions to problem-oriented confrontation.

Social adjustment and the assumption of the professional role are hindered by a sense of abandonment and an authority as well as an inferiority complex. They would like to meet the demands of the profession, yet they experience abandonment and they feel like they cannot cope with the burdens laid on them. This causes them to further downplay their abilities, and their sense of perspective is greatly distorted. Anxieties and impulsiveness may feed off these; a fact we have shown using the Woodworth questionnaire. They fall behind ON both levels of progress: the area of self-fulfillment and production.

**Summary: the emotional-rational disposition of early-career caregivers towards the future**

Our investigation has, on the one hand, led to the conclusion that the young, in order to make their goals a reality, need assistance. Changes must be effected in the institutes providing training with regard to organization and content that would make possible optimal intellectual development, physical and psychological growth, which in turn would make them suited for fulfilling their societal responsibilities and at the same time allow them to live in balance with themselves and their environment. In addition, they should be provided with postgraduate career socialization courses and supervision.

On the other hand, the expectations of early-career professionals towards the environment are insufficient; inner development and transformations suited to the situation at hand are needed. They will only experience the environment as a safe one and themselves as possessed of free possibilities if they become capable of exercising an active confrontational behavior and if they favor problem-oriented solutions. They have only reached the first step in this process: gathering strength. They believe to find the wellsprings necessary to balanced adaptation and continuous inner transformations by turning towards vital and moral values. This is where they wish to come upon the capacity to fight, the self-respect and the élan needed for the appropriate activity.

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