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Mental characteristics of personality in a state of ambiguity: a historical review

Abstract. *The article deals with the mental features of a person experiencing ambiguity caused by COVID-19, an impact of a unique phenomenon which has led to isolation and global stress at the global level – anxiety, stress, depression which has caused anxiety due to ambiguity, which in turn discourages a person and prevent anyone from comfortable mental development. It is observed that anxiety as a manifestation of sensitivity to stress, in turn, affects the level of tolerance to ambiguity.*

However, it is possible to make sure that this problem, having experienced an inner potential, especially powerful resource states that have never been observed in a person, motivates him/her to realize it, as a personality characteristic of a person, to accept tolerance for ambiguity as a life norm, to combine truth with creativity with subjective certainty.

It is quite possible that the tolerance against ambiguity experienced in the global context will have a positive effect on improving one's personality, as well as on striving for stability and integrity, increasing the ability to overcome adversity.

In the process of analyzing the results of the studies, it is observed that people with a high level of anxiety have a lower tolerance for ambiguity. Certainly, it will not be easy to any person to accept and to convince himself/herself that in such a complex situation they cannot keep all the difficulties and changes under their control. In this regard, because of uncertainty, it causes anxiety leading to fear and fright in person. As a result, there are various obstacles, which prevent a person from optimal development.

At the same time, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was revealed in the anamnesis of examinee that people with mental health problems were deeply depressed and more likely to experience a state of stress. During the pandemic, the observation of mental reactions based on age and gender characteristics of a person, the features of groups vulnerable to depression, stress and anxiety symptoms were shown.

The most effective way to overcome ambiguity is to deny that it exists.

Keywords: *mental processes, personality, COVID-19, ambiguity, tolerance to ambiguity.*

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Introduction

COVID-19 is a unique phenomenon taken in history for the first time that has led to global isolation and one-time global shocks. During the global condition of the pandemic period, there is a concern about the threat of COVID-19, and a state of complete ambiguity remains around it. Therefore, despite the further development of the pandemic, the global fight against the virus can affect economic growth, employment, and politics for a long time. All this ultimately leads to a state of ambiguity, which causes anxiety and fear in every person.

However, it is obvious to say that this situation encourages people to understand and develop previously unseen resource states in a person and the tolerance of ambiguity as a

personal characteristic of an individual accepts ambiguity as a norm of life, creatively turns the surrounding reality into subjective belief.

Tolerance of ambiguity in the current global situation can increase a person's ability to achieve personal maturity, stability, and integrity, and cope with anxiety.

The best way to overcome ambiguity is to admit that it exists.

Pandemics and forced self-isolation can further contribute to acute and chronic stress, the subsequent formation of post-traumatic stress, sleep disorders, psychosomatic reactions, increased anxiety and depression, irritability, and aggression directed both to themselves and outwardly.

Anxiety is a natural emotion. Anxiety is common among people with a lower threshold of sensitivity to stress, who easily respond to any stimulus. Another characteristic feature of people with high anxiety is a low tolerance for ambiguity. It is difficult for a person to accept the idea that we cannot control everything. As a result, it causes anxiety due to ambiguity leading to fear and panic, in its turn, it prevents an individual from being developed.

For example, a person is to be in constant development and formation. Although, he/she is very stressed, he/she continues to move from one state to another. Survival is a constant development that promotes endless change.

Therefore, useful experiences of ambiguity are experiences painted in a positive emotional tone: curiosity, search, situational activity, activation of the imagination, the emergence of new insights, joy, excitement, and research based on great zeal and lead to changes in the nature of the ambiguity situation from a creative and meaningful point of view.

Ambiguity reveals the desire of many people to control. To ensure security, we need to change our behavior to control what can be controlled and used, but it does not matter if we change our thoughts about what cannot be controlled.

Of course, while stress mobilizes the body's immune system, chronic stress can weaken it.

Although, a person shows concentration and takes reasonable precautions, attention, thinking and willpower, and general health may deteriorate.

This is what everyone needs to be able to help himself/herself to understand their resource aspects, and to direct them positively.

For example, during the pandemic, many people have been encouraged to show compassion and give a hand to loved ones, even to strangers who have never been familiar with before, and this influenced on their emotional intelligence, show empathy, and tolerance for ambiguity.

The range of stress and emotions we experience, even having suffered from illness or grief can also have positive consequences. According to the research works, the people who have experienced very difficult life experiences advise becoming more psychologically and physically stable.

Methodology

To define the concept of «mental characteristics of personality in a state of uncertainty» and generalize existing classifications, the authors analyzed the most significant works in the problem area.

This research paper is part of a classical and modern discipline that deals with the variables of the object of research, in particular «mental characteristics of a personality in a state of uncertainty». As a result of this theoretical review, an interpretation of general and specific concepts related to the discipline was developed, concepts and approaches to this issue were implemented using the hermeneutic method

Results and Discussion

Currently, Kazakhstan and the world as a whole have a certain picture of how pandemics and quarantine measures have affected the mental state of people. Some published studies include a short-term period of several weeks to several months and usually a period of self-isolation. Therefore, the content of this theoretical study is the relevance of the problem of studying the

multidimensional nature of the stress effects which has developed into the COVID-19 pandemic and ways to combat ambiguity.

Most of the foreign and local studies published in 2020-2021 related to the description of the peculiarities of the mental response of various categories of citizens to the period of exacerbation of pandemic and self-isolation. Summing up these data, we can conclude that despite the geolocation and the number of COVID-19 cases, there has been a consistently high level of stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders around the world [1; 16].

A number of studies have shown that during a period of the COVID-19 pandemic, people with a history of mental health problems are likely to experience great psychological stress [11; 12]. The observation of mental reactions during a Coronavirus outbreak by the age of a person shows the characteristics of groups vulnerable to stress, depression, and anxiety symptoms [13; 14]. Gender analysis of an early psychological impact of the pandemic shows that a range of anxiety symptoms is pronounced more in women [15; 16]. The results of the longitude study show that during a period of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, women show more pronounced, expressive response to stress, anxiety, and depression at the same time and in the long run than men [17].

The concept of ambiguity in the scientific literature is interpreted differently. According to the content of research, ambiguity is associated like: «a personal tendency to evaluate uncertain situations as desirable or dangerous» (S.Budner), «the tendency to perceive unknown information as a form of psychological discomfort» (R.Norton), «a wide range of reactions from rejection to attractiveness in the interpretation of unknown contradictory stimulus» (d. McLain), «a system of relationships, a position that includes cognitive assessment of uncertainty, an emotional response, and a specific behavioral response» (E.G.Lukovitskaya), «a cognitive style associated with the inability to perceive incentive that predict alternative interpretations without discomfort» (M.A.Kholodnaya), «the ability to overcome anxiety about a relatively unpredictable future» (D. A. Leontiev), as an «intellectual personality trait compatible with risk preparedness» (T.V.Kornilova), individual differences weaken or intensify in the usual conditions of communication and work, as well as in case of changes in the requirements of society, for example, in the world during a pandemic (N.N. Hon, L.N.Rogaleva, A.M. Kim, Zh.K. Aidosova, N.A. Aldabergenov) [3, 7; 9].

Ambiguity forces current people to live in a changing, volatile, unpredictable environment. The speed, depth, and unpredictability of changes lead to an increase of personal changes necessary for successful adaptation and survival in an ever-changing environment to the global problem of personal development.

The phenomenon of tolerance to ambiguity is closely linked with the current problems of our time. Overloaded information and the increasing pace of life have created the problem of the global ambiguity of human life. This creates a problem for the psychological well-being of a person. While unprecedented measures aimed at slowing and stopping the spread of COVID-19 have helped the population save time and reduce the burden on health systems, we cannot say that the social and economic costs have been minimal.

With the rapid spread of the new COVID-19 coronavirus infection pandemic to many countries around the world, to keep the physical distance and isolation measures, and a period of closing schools and businesses, people began to experience fear, panic, and anxiety. During quarantine conditions, people will not be able to satisfy their needs as they had done before, they will not be able to go where they want and stay with the people they want. This applies to both general population and certain groups of citizens, for example, the elderly or people providing health services, and people with health problems who have been facing these problems.

According to N.V.Kruglova, an individual who is resistant to ambiguity can feel comfortable even in conditions of high ambiguity. He is able to act effectively in an unfamiliar environment and often takes responsibility when there is a lack of information, can make decisions without long doubts and fear of failure. In special situations, he can see the opportunity to develop and demonstrate his abilities and skills.

If a person cannot tolerate ambiguity, he tends to perceive particularly difficult situations as dangerous rather than a new opportunity. Lack of information or its ambiguity and inaccuracy cause inconvenience. People, who do not tolerate ambiguity tend to feel better in a familiar environment and are more likely to achieve clear goals and simple tasks. The main sources of intolerance to ambiguity can provide the novelty of the problem, the complexity of the problem, and the unresolved problem [18, 19].

In the interpretation of the phenomenon of ambiguity, it is common to discuss it as an emotional reaction, being in ambiguity, a manifestation of the ability to overcome ambiguity or tolerance for ambiguity. Under conditions of ambiguity, all mental activity of a person changes into a complex of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and other manifestations. All this, in its turn, leads to changes in mental state.

Mental states vary depending on the situation, which characterizes the features of a person's mental reaction, interpretation, and self-regulation due to certain external changes and effects (Prokhorov, 2020).

M.E.Valiullina, G.Sh.Gabdreeva, V.D.Mendelevich, A.O.Prokhorov consider mental states in terms of information and energy bases, as a set of different characteristics of a person that appear in the dynamics of mental activity and reflect the unity of behavior and experience. [10].

Ambiguity is a condition that accompanies throughout the life in general. People in such a situation differ from each other by varying degrees of tolerance. While tolerant people easily cope with uncertainty about what will happen in the near future, low tolerant people have much higher levels of anxiety.

During the pandemic, it has been observed that the feeling of ambiguity is higher than usual. Tolerance for ambiguity is based on demands related to the desire to control. The virus itself has not been fully studied and is still unclear to many people. At the same time, information about the pandemic is not always consistent, and there are many things that are not systematically organized, as well as measures to prevent the epidemic.

The lack of confidence in the media, the authorities and the state which is typical for Kazakh people has even more increased a high state of ambiguity. In addition, the pandemic has not only threatened health, but also has negatively influenced on the economy, and most people feel that their economic well-being is at risk. In this case, the feeling of ambiguity will increase even more.

For instance, if a person is suddenly attacked by a predator in the forest, we think that the object of danger and reaction of a person can be obvious. In practice, cognitive processing is not necessary here. In case of danger, depending on which reaction of a human body, psychological characteristics are prone to, one freezes with panic or runs away, the other shows aggression.

In case of information plan stress, cognitive processing mechanisms are activated. Therefore, reactions occur indirectly through the cognitive processes of a person, through interpretation, but not directly. And in the situation of informational stress, people behave differently. Even in this case, you can see the prototypes of the main reactions: fighting, running, freezing with panic. However, their appearance may not be so obvious. At such moments, some people act as aggressively as possible, others protest against the measures taken by the authorities, others lose their minds, and others rush to buy the necessary items from the shelves.

In stressful situations, several different psychological mechanisms are activated. One of the defense mechanisms is denial. If a denial mechanism is activated, a person is forced to reinforce his point of view and starts to look for facts and figures that deny the importance of the problem and to differentiate them in his own way (for example, publishing statistics about the constant death rate). Often the meaning of such facts happen out of context.

Another mechanism for managing emotions is catastrophe exaggeration (catastrophization). In this case, people increase the probability of the worst sample result, causing fear and anxiety increase.

Another mechanism of controlling emotion is distraction, i.e. changing attention to the other aspects of life. The results of the study show that this mechanism has a dual role. From other side, anxiety skills are specifically trained in people who have difficulties in controlling emotions [20].

In the study of anxiety as an emotion controlling strategy, two clusters of respondents with the same severity of the anxiety strategies were identified. In one of them, anxiety was combined with «perception» strategy, and in the other one with «avoidance» strategy. Respondents included in «anxiety-acceptance» cluster showed higher scores on all measures of psychological well-being compared to respondents included in «anxiety-avoidance» cluster. Perhaps, it shows us that anxiety works well for us when the situation does not comply with our control, and bad if it is a means to avoid trying to cope with the stressful situation. Recommendations for handling anxiety during a pandemic are based on these conditions: clearly distinguishing between what can be controlled (isolation, hand washing, etc.) and what cannot be controlled (and these risks should be taken as evidence today).

The need to manage one's life is normal and common to everyone. But, it is important to know its size and extent. In case of ambiguity, people who are highly stressed require assurance from themselves and the world that everything is going to be fine. But, these requirements often turn out to be unrealistic and inappropriate to the situation. We can control most of our lives, but not everything can be provided.

Another component of stress experienced in crisis is not related to trauma. Although our health was not in great danger in our own home while we were isolated, that situation was a very painful period for us. The inability to get out of the entanglement of various thoughts and loneliness, the lack of air, on the one hand, harmony with life and the loss of virus and financial well-being do not pose a physical threat to us. On the other hand, we are concerned about feelings of dissatisfaction, because without quarantine we lose the values we can live with. When we are influenced by something, we feel different emotions, and this obligates us to exist in a psychological sense. If a person is not able to do important things for himself, then he will not have enough to feel emotional situations and gradually begins to lose energy, he will get depressed.

Millions of people around the world ask themselves the same question: What can be best for me within four walls? What makes me happy, what can interest and inspire me? Despite the various suggestions of psychologists, as a result of advice or suggestion the value cannot arise automatically by itself, but it can be determined by experience. No one can create value for us. This is a personal process that requires concentration in the «here and now» moment and attention to your feelings in the face of limited opportunities.

If we talk about the cognitive processing of the state of dissatisfaction, then, it is first of all, a cognitive reassessment, that is, a change of attitude to what is happening. Science knows the mechanisms of social comparison: people tend to compare themselves with other people, and in the case of disorientation, these tendencies are intensified. In normal life, if we compare ourselves with happier and more successful people than we are, then in difficult situations the comparison can be in their favor: «it's better for me to be at home, not in the hospital» and «doctors are much worse than me now». If it is impossible to accept limitations of our control, we experience ruminations—obsessive thoughts that go round and round in circles. A person get exhausted from all these, and as a result, anxiety can turn into depression. People who are ready to admit and accept the things in the world, which cannot be controlled can safely experience situations of ambiguity.

The classics of psychological science called this human ability differently: understanding the meaning of the world (V. Frankl), the process of individualization (K. G. Jung), self-improvement (A. Maslow). In fact, the personal answers to questions like «Why me?» and «Where am I going?» are being discussed. Current epidemiological studies show that having a purpose in a person's life has a positive effect not only on mental health, but also on the body. Having a goal reduces the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and the intensity of cognitive impairment as people age, and reduces the likelihood of stroke and myocardial infarction among people with cardiovascular disease [21].

Conclusion

The idea of the inequality of mental states depends on the possibility of studying dynamic changes such as periods of change of mental states, their mutual interaction, and transformation, determining the dependence of mental states on external and internal conditions of human life.

Thus, the effect of the state of ambiguity is undoubtedly observed differently in each person. Ambiguity is overcome through the interpretation of a person's state, the development and evaluation of his attitude to reality, his attitude to it, and his actions in this regard. In addition to the uniqueness of the problem under consideration, there is no doubt that there are universal rules of human behavior in times of crisis.

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Тұлғаның белгісіздік жағдайындағы психикалық ерекшеліктері: теориялық шолу

Аңдатпа. Мақалада әлемдік деңгейде оқшаулануға және күллі адамзатты күйзеліске әкелген ерекше құбылыс COVID-19 әсерінен туындаған белгісіздік жағдайындағы кешірген тұлғаның психикалық ерекшеліктері – мазасыздық, стресс, күйзеліс туралы, белгісіздік салдарынан алаңдаушылықтың туындауына себепші болып, ал өз кезегінде үрей тудырып, адамға кедергі келтіретіні және адамның жайлы психикалық дамуына жол бермейтіні турасында сөз етіледі. Мазасыздық стресске сезімталдықтың көрініс ретінде өз кезегінде белгісіздікке толеранттылықтың деңгейіне әсер ететіні байқалады.

Алайда осы аталған мәселе адамда бұрын-соңды байқалмаған ішкі әлеуетті, ерекше қуатты ресурстық күйлерді басынан кешіріп, оны жүзеге асыруға талпындырып, адамның тұлғалық сипаты ретінде белгісіздікке төзімділікті өмірлік норма ретінде қабылдауға, ақиқатты шығармашылықпен субъективті сенімділікке ұштастыратынына көз жеткізуге болады.

Ғаламдық тұрғыда орын алған белгісіздікке толеранттылықпен қарсы тұру адамның тұлғалық жағынан жетілуге, сондай-ақ тұрақтылық пен тұтастыққа ұмтылуға, қолайсыздықты еңсере алуға қабілеттілігін арттыруға оң әсерінің болуы әбден мүмкін.

Зерттеулердің нәтижелеріне талдау жасау барысында мазасыздық деңгейі жоғары адамдарда белгісіздікке деген толеранттылықтың төмен болатыны байқалады. Осындай күрделі жағдайда адамда қиындықтар мен өзгерістердің барлығын өз бақылауымызда ұстай алмаймыз деген ойды қабылдау, өзін сендіру әрине оңай болмайды. Осы орайда белгісіздіктің нәтижесінде мазасыздық туындап, адамда қорқыныш, үрей пайда болады, бұл жайттың салдарынан түрлі сипаттағы кедергілер бой көрсетіп, адамның оңтайлы дамуына жол бермейді.

Сонымен қатар covid-19 пандемиясының тұсында зерттелінушілердің анамнезінде психикалық денсаулығында кінараты бар адамдардың терең күйзеліске түсіп, стрестік күйге жиі ұшырайтындығы анықталған. Індеттің белең алуы кезінде психикалық реакциялардың адамның жас және гендерлік ерекшеліктеріне қарай байқалуы, депрессияға, стресске және мазасыздық белгілеріне осал топтардың ерекшеліктері көрсетілген.

Түйін сөздер: психикалық процестер, тұлға, COVID-19, белгісіздік, белгісіздікке толеранттылық.

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Психические особенности личности в условиях неопределенности: теоретический обзор

Аннотация. В статье речь идет о психических особенностях человека, переживающего в условиях неопределенности, вызванной воздействием уникального явления, которое привело к изоляции и глобальному стрессу на мировом уровне COVID-19 – тревожности, стрессе, переживании, тревожности вследствие неопределенности, которая, в свою очередь, препятствует психическому

благополучию человека. Отмечается, что тревога как проявление чувствительности к стрессу, в свою очередь, влияет на уровень толерантности к неопределенности. И лучший способ преодолеть неуверенность - это признать, что она существует.

Однако можно убедиться, что данная проблема о переживании человеком ранее не наблюдавшихся у него внутренних, особо мощных потенциальных ресурсных состояний, которая, побуждая его к реализации, предполагает принятие толерантности к неопределенности как личностной характеристики человека в виде жизненной нормы, приобщает истину к творческому субъективному убеждению.

Вполне возможно, что толерантное противостояние глобально существующей неопределенности окажет положительное влияние на возрастание способности человека к личностному совершенствованию, а также стремлению к стабильности и целостности, преодолению дискомфорта.

В ходе анализа результатов исследований выявлено, что у людей с высоким уровнем тревожности наблюдается низкая толерантность к неопределенности. В такой сложной ситуации, конечно, нелегко будет принять мысль, убедить себя, что мы не в состоянии выдерживать все трудности и изменения в человеке под контролем. При этом в результате неопределенности возникает тревога, у человека появляется страх, что приводит к возникновению препятствий различного характера, препятствующих оптимальному развитию личности.

Кроме того, в анамнезе обследуемых во время пандемии COVID-19 было установлено, что люди, имеющие проблемы с психическим здоровьем, часто подвергаются глубокому стрессу и стрессовому состоянию. В период обострения эпидемии отмечается выраженность психических реакций в зависимости от возрастных и гендерных особенностей человека, особенности уязвимых групп к депрессиям, стрессам и тревожным симптомам.

Ключевые слова: психические процессы, личность, COVID-19, неопределенность, толерантность к неопределенности.

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