

Ethical and Moral Levels in the Functioning of the Personality of the Educational Psychologist

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Background. There is a growing movement worldwide for ethical regulation of psychologists' research-oriented, educational, and practical activities. However, expectations that the better the code of ethics, the safer and more effective the professional activity will be, are not being met. For this reason, it is beneficial to distinguish two levels of the psychologist's professional functioning: that related to his or her role, and that on the personal level; this makes it possible to more adequately analyze the psychological aspects of ethical and moral regulation in professional interaction.

Objective. To compare the psychological foundations of the educational psychologist's ethical and moral professional behavior at the role and personal levels.

Design. Analysis, generalization, and identification, through a review of the literature, of the main factors influencing the ethical and moral regulation of professional behavior of psychologists.

Results. Surveys of specialists show that it is difficult both for the client and for the psychologist to follow a formal ethical code unconditionally. We considered the limitations of ethical regulation of professional activity, when, even with a good knowledge of the ethical norms on the part of the specialists, external monitoring is required to guarantee the safety of their subjects. We emphasize that the wide variety of psychological assistance provided by psychologists to their clients requires different degrees of personal involvement on the part of the specialist. We propose to distinguish two levels of professional interaction in the psychologist's activity: the role level and the personal level, corresponding to different mechanisms of the moral regulation of the specialist's behavior. At the role level, there is no need for deep personal involvement; the external motives of moral regulation (knowledge of the code requirements and fear of administrative sanctions for negative consequences) serve as psychological mechanisms of compliance with ethical standards. On the personal level, other psychological mechanisms are required for the performance of professional duties, such as internal motives underlying moral behavior (a mature and sensitive conscience and a positive philosophy of life). The personal level of moral professional behavior regulation makes it possible to provide a much greater degree of safety in the interaction between psychologist and client, and in the absence of external oversight.

Conclusion. We compare two approaches to the explanation of the psychological foundations of moral functioning: models enumerating the personal qualities defining moral behavior and models of integrated moral functioning. The article describes the existential-ontological concept of moral functioning, correlating the maturity of individual moral consciousness, awareness of the adoption of a particular ethical system of norms and ideals, and the conscience. We conclude that it is necessary to educate future specialists as mature, integrated personalities, ensuring integrated moral functioning in their professional interactions.

Keywords: ethical regulation of psychologists' activity; moral functioning; authenticity; identity; conscience; existential concept of moral functioning; situations of moral choice

Introduction

Ethical issues facing psychologists are today a focus of the world psychological community (Forman & Roulz, 2004; Garber, 2014; Leach & Welfel, 2018; Lindsay, 2012; Klyueva & Armashova, 2016; Tarasova, 2017; Miklyaeva, Veselova, Semenova, & Bakhvalova, 2019). The ethical component of the profession is formed under the influence of public morality and depends on specialists' practical experience. Ethical requirements mature not as a result of scientific research, but after assessing the results of practical interaction with clients and subjects of psychological care (Lindsay, 2012).

The school psychologist's support for subjects of the educational process takes very diverse forms. Analysis of the literature on ethical regulation of psychologists' work shows that for the recipient of psychological assistance as well as for the specialist, unconditional adherence to ethical professional codes is impossible or may even be harmful (Forman & Roulz, 2004; Garber, 2014; Klyueva & Armashova, 2016; Kolay, 2012; Pryazhnikov, 1999, 2004; Tang & Tan, 2015). A situation of moral choice in professional activity when any decision, even one that meets ethical requirements, causes harm to any of the participants, poses a moral dilemma (Razin, 2014).

Moral dilemmas are being actively studied today in psychological science, in relation both to general issues of the psychology of moral choice (Álvarez & Rodríguez-González, 2016; Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001) and to the professional activities of psychologists (Klyueva & Armashova, 2016). A school psychologist's activity is always something more than the application of skills and abilities within the framework of existing knowledge, and always includes a preliminary ethical assessment of future actions. Ethical considerations in some cases precede practical action, and raise the question of its admissibility in the context of a particular life situation.

Ethical regulation is formed from the accumulated experience of working with clients and subjects of assistance. Specialists' practical actions to meet ethical requirements are, on the one hand, the result of comparing the task and the means available to solve it, and, on the other hand, the assessment of past actions gained in practical experience (Lindsay, 2012). At the same time, experience shows that different activities by psychologists include ethical problems to varying degrees and require different degrees of the specialist's involvement in the professional interaction. Psychologists' work in education, psychodiagnostics, and psychoprophylaxis can be effectively carried out at the role level with good knowledge and compliance with the ethical code. Counseling and psychotherapy related to the solution of a client's emotional and other personal problems require a deeper personal involvement, and the psychological mechanisms that ensure ethical compliance in these two cases will be different.

The disadvantages of ethical regulation are known and consist of the following: (a) even with good knowledge of the ethical norms on the part of specialists, external oversight is required to guarantee the safety of the subjects of the professional interaction; (b) there is a possibility that a specialist will make a suboptimal moral decision if there is an ethical dilemma. At the same time, the personal level of moral professional behavior can provide a much greater degree of security in the interaction between the psychologist and the client, even in the absence of external oversight (Forman, Roulz, 2004; Garber, 2014).

The psychological mechanisms of integrated moral functioning are being actively discussed today in the foreign psychological literature. Currently, there are two different points of view addressing the psychological foundations of moral functioning: (a) approaches that list the qualities of the moral personality and components of the moral sphere (Haidt, 2001; Kohlberg, 1984; Narvaes & Lapsley, 2009); (b) approaches focusing on integrated moral functioning (Blasi, 1983, 2004; Hardy & Carlo, 2005; Narvaes & Lapsley, 2009; Veselova, 2003).

The existential-ontological concept of moral functioning implies moral functioning integrated into the personality, and links the maturity of individual moral consciousness, the awareness of adopting a particular ethical system of norms and ideals, with the conscience. The conclusion is reached that it is necessary to educate future specialists as mature, integrated personalities, ensuring integrated moral functioning in their professional interactions.

Method

We conducted a theoretical study of the ethical and moral regulation of the psychologist's professional activity, taking into account the scientific principles of *essential analysis* and *conceptual unity* of the study. The principle of essential analysis assumes a correlation in the studied phenomena of the common, special, and single. This principle involves the movement of research thought from description to explanation and prediction. The following basic requirements must be fulfilled: taking into account changing views on the problem; allocation of the main factors influencing understanding of the phenomenon under study; disclosure of the inconsistency of the subject. The principle of conceptual unity of research involves a consistent analysis of the problem on the basis of a single defined concept.

Results

Levels of Functioning of a School Psychologist in Professional Interaction

We believe it is necessary to formulate a difference in the specialist's professional functioning at two different levels, corresponding to the degree of involvement in professional interaction: the *role level* of involvement, which assumes ethical regulation of professional activity, and the *personal level*, which assumes a deeper involvement in professional interaction and the moral readiness of the specialist to function at this level. N.S. Pryazhnikov speaks about the ethical regulators of the school psychologist and identifies three levels: (a) *legal*, based on international and state normative documents, such as the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", the "Convention on the Rights of the Child", the "Law of the Russian Federation on Education", etc.; (b) *ethical*, reflected in numerous ethical codes and statutes, setting out ethical principles and requirements at different levels; (c) *moral*, assuming a certain value-semantic maturity of the psychologist's personality (Pryazhnikov, 1999). We believe that the legal level is always included in the ethical level, as ethical codes require the mandatory implementation of international and state regulatory documents; that is a mandatory requirement for specialists.

Psychologists' work in education, psychodiagnostics, and psychoprophylaxis can be effectively carried out at the role level given good knowledge of and compliance with professional duties. Counseling related to the client's emotional and per-

sonal problems requires a deeper personal involvement in professional interaction and corresponds to the personal level.

Table 1 presents the levels of the psychologist’s professional interaction with clients and subjects in the educational environment.

Table 1

Levels of a specialist’s functioning in a professional environment

| Psychologist’s educational activities | Psychologist–client interaction at the role/personal level | Necessary professional skills and personal qualities |
|--|---|--|
| Psychological education | Lecturer–audience interaction (role level) | Competence |
| Psychological prophylaxis | Psychologist–group interaction (role level) | Knowledge of and compliance with the code of ethics |
| Psychological diagnosis | Psychologist–test subject interaction (role level) | Knowledge of the ethics of role-playing |
| Psychological consultation | Personality–personality interaction (personal level) | Moral readiness of the specialist for deep personal involvement in interaction |

In the first column, you can see possible activities by the psychologist in the educational environment. The second column indicates the level of professional interaction. The third column presents the necessary professional skills and personal qualities corresponding to the particular type of activity.

Ethical and Psychological Aspects of the Educational Psychologist’s Professional Interactions at the Role Level

The ethical regulation of professional interaction corresponding to the role level is based on the specialist’s moral responsibility to clients, colleagues, and society, as established by the ethical code of the educational psychologist. However, there are specific, as yet unresolved problems in this respect (Eticheski kodeks..., 2003; Model’nyi kodeks ..., 2014). It would seem that the better the ethical code, the safer and more effective the professional activities will be, both for the client and for the specialist, but surveys of specialists show that psychologists can find it difficult to follow ethical norms unconditionally (Forman & Roulz, 2004; Kolay, 2012; Pryazhnikov, 2004). Although school psychologists understand the ethical norms and the essence of ethical responsibility, they recognize that in some situations they violate ethical norms, and some situations cause them difficulties because these are not ethically regulated in any way, although they should be.

These situations pose ethical dilemmas. The ethical dilemma is a situation of moral choice, and involving only mutually exclusive solutions, and none of these solutions is perfect from a moral point of view. Someone will suffer when a situation presents a moral dilemma – either the client or his relatives, or the specialist – or some legal regulations will be violated. Therefore, in moral dilemmas, the ethical code will not help. Only a mature, moral person with experience and moral reliability can solve the problem.

A large problem of the school psychologist's ethical regulation at the role level is the absence in Russia of a special mechanism for external oversight of compliance with ethical standards; there are no special supervisory boards developing policies and rules for the protection of participants in professional interaction (Garber, 2014). This is a big flaw in ethical regulation, since even with good knowledge of ethical norms, external oversight is required to guarantee the safety of the subjects of professional interaction. L. Kohlberg also found that good knowledge of moral norms and agreement with them is not an indicator of personal high morality. A person may be convinced that "one should not steal", "one should not tell lies", "one should fulfill the obligations one has assumed", but will in some circumstances behave in the opposite way (Antsyferova, 1999). It is also necessary to further clarify and improve the ethical codes themselves, in relation to the psychologist's activities in innovative areas of education, for example in inclusive and integrative education (Miklyaeva et al., 2019).

The authors analyzed the Model Code of the teacher, intended for ethical regulation of the educational psychologist's activity, and found that its content does not reflect the work performed in the new conditions of integrated and inclusive education, and needs to be supplemented (Model'nyi kodeks ..., 2014). We found it advisable to specify the content of the principles of respect and competence in relation to the problems of inclusion and integration, as well as to disclose the content of the confidentiality principle. The study showed that in conditions of integration and inclusion, there are a number of moral dilemmas that cannot be resolved based on existing professional ethical codes, especially in situations of deeper immersion of a specialist in the problems of children with disabilities, necessary for the psychological and pedagogical support of inclusive subjects (Eticheskii kodeks ..., 2003; Miklyaeva et al., 2019; Yamshchikova, 2017). In these cases, such qualities of the educational psychologist's personality as moral maturity and moral reliability come to the fore, allowing him or her to adhere to general ethical principles in difficult professional situations of ethical dilemmas. The criteria for the psychologist's success require a broader context, including spiritual and moral aspects (Dvoretzkaya & Loshchakova, 2016).

The problem of the general ethical crisis is discussed by Robert Kenny from the University of Pittsburgh, who says that the modern crisis in ethics is caused by a pathological desire for profit; he reminds us of the psychological mechanism of conscience, an attentive attitude to which will contribute to the moral education of specialists and to moral professional behavior (Kenny, 2016).

Features of the School Psychologist's Moral Functioning at the Personal Level

Professional interaction at the personal level requires professional knowledge and skills, as well as the moral readiness of the specialist for deeper personal involvement in professional interaction. Maturity of personality is also required.

In psychology, there has long been a discussion about the role of the personality of the psychologist-consultant in positive changes in the personality of clients, their attitudes, behavior, etc. (Deurzen, 2007; Garber, 2014; Klyueva & Armashova, 2018). There are several lists of personal properties that determine the effectiveness of psychological counseling and psychotherapy; however, these lists rarely mention actual moral qualities. Moral reliability is not mentioned, although it is the most important

quality of the helping specialist (see, e.g., Gledding, 2002; Kochyunas, 1999; Makhnach, 2011; Puchkova, 2016; Tsvetkova, Volkova, Korzhova, & Miklyaeva, 2017).

Moral reliability can be defined as the ability to comply with the ethical code in the most complex and unforeseen situations of interaction with people in crisis situations, with clients who have severe psychological conditions, in situations of moral dilemmas. This quality is necessary for working in circumstances such as unplanned lengthening of the working day, the performance of unpaid services, or the need for personal participation in the troubles and problems of a ward.

A mature, integrated personality is morally reliable. There are three criteria from Allport's list of criteria for maturity that are relevant to moral functioning: a unifying philosophy of life, including special moral value orientations; differentiated religious feelings that justify the person's moral choice; a personalized (mature) conscience (Allport, 2002). According to Allport, maturity of conscience corresponds to the highest postconventional level of moral functioning as described by Kohlberg (Antsyferova, 1999; Kohlberg, 1969). With a mature conscience, a person acquires the following qualities: independence from the opinions of society, and the priority of one's own point of view over that of society. Further, the person does not obey rules incompatible with the dictates of conscience and functions as an independent moral subject.

The interaction of two people, the decisive moment of which is the creation of a relationship of trust between them, is at the center of the psychologist's professional interaction at the personal level, whether in counseling or psychotherapy. The meeting of the helping specialist with a client is a meeting of two personalities, and their interaction is carried out at the universal level – “face to face”. This is very well expressed by Carl Rogers, who associated the effectiveness of psychological assistance with the fact that the consultant interacts with the client as a unique person and not as a teacher, lecturer, instructor, scientist, etc. Any approach based on the assumption that the client is the object of training is useless (Rogers, 1994). Rogers poses the question as follows: How can we establish a relationship with a person that he or she can use for their own development? He emphasizes the importance of the consultant psychologist's understanding of the fundamentals of human nature, which he believes is not given enough attention. The quality of professional interaction depends on the psychologist's life philosophy, worldview, basic beliefs about existential issues of life, and idea of what a person should be at the highest stage of development, the person's main, essential quality (Rogers, 1994).

In Russian psychology, a similar view about the way of treating another person was expressed by S. L. Rubinstein, who is now considered the founder of Russian moral, ethical psychology. The significance, the value of persons is determined by what relations they are able to establish with others. According to B. S. Bratus', this is the interface of psychology and ethics (Bratus', 2008). Such an understanding of the person is inherent in Russian humanitarian thought (Mironenko, 2019).

Our research has shown that there is a deep connection of the worldview or philosophy of life according to G. Allport (Allport, 2002) with the moral principles of a person associated with the basic, often unconscious, existential-ontological beliefs of the specialist and with the state of that person's conscience (Veselova, 2009). Conscience is not only a mechanism of moral behavior regulation, but also a deep structure of personality, through which a person can learn about their own nature

(about the unity of the natural essence of all people), and, in particular, about their own genuineness (i.e., their own correspondence to this nature) (Heidegger, 1997).

One of the most important qualities necessary for effective interaction of the consulting psychologist with the client is authenticity. By authenticity, Rogers understood people's awareness of their own experiences and feelings, their accessibility, the ability to live, experience, and express themselves in communication with other people, while rejecting various social roles (Rogers, 1994). Often the term genuineness is used as a synonym to refer to this quality, but in essence these terms are different. The term authenticity has a much narrower meaning than genuineness.

Authentic people *are* themselves, accept themselves as they are, express sincere agreement that these features are present in the structure of their self-concept. But, authenticity is not always associated with positive qualities, including moral ones. It is possible to be authentic, but not genuine, in the sense of conformity to human moral nature.

The concept of the genuineness of a personality is linked by experts in existential psychotherapy with the effectiveness of the therapist, the effectiveness of his or her personality as an integrated instrument for working with the client (Deurzen, 2004, 2007). Genuineness is a quality of personality directly related to moral functioning based on fundamental existential-ontological beliefs and an autonomous conscience. It is the phenomenon of conscience that brings people back again and again to the possibility of being themselves. The genuineness of the educational psychologist's and psychotherapist's personality is the most important professional quality, although it is quite mysterious and still indeterminate. It can be assumed that genuineness is the correspondence of the state of conscience to a person's true nature, in the sense of its highest possible moral development, manifesting itself in interaction with other people.

Both Russian and foreign researchers today have come to the conclusion that it is possible to explain moral behavior only by considering a person as an integrally functioning subject (e.g., Mukhametzyanova, Korzhova, & Gaysina, 2017).

One of the main concepts of integrated moral functioning is that of Augusto Blasi (2004). His model has three components: (a) moral judgments involving responsibility; (b) the moral self (moral identity); the correspondence of this image to an ideal personality; (c) internal consistency of the self; integrity as the desire to live in harmony with oneself, to have a holistic view of the self and to be responsible for one's own actions.

The integrated personality is also at the theoretical foundation of Russian research into moral functioning. The works of M.M. Bakhtin (1994) form the philosophical basis of this view: "There are no moral norms that are certain and significant in themselves, but there is a moral subject with a certain structure ... which one has to rely on: It will know what will be moral and proper, and when that will be so..." (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 14). Bakhtin's moral subject presents himself or herself as a responsible, active participant – a "person".

Psychological analysis of human behavior in a situation of moral choice shows that we are dealing with the problem of the maturity of moral consciousness in a personality, an awareness of the acceptance of a particular ethical system of norms and ideals in the context of a broader worldview.

An important question here is the personal identification with ideals embodying the corresponding ethical principles and world outlook.

Conscience as a sensory system in the sphere of morality sets the level of sensitivity to situations of moral choice, irrationally determines the correspondence of individual actions to the image of the moral self adopted by the person.

If people acted in one way or another under the influence of external factors, their actions would not be subject to moral evaluation, and they themselves would not bear any responsibility for them or for their thoughts. Thus, the ethical ideal is important for the realization that a person is not entirely a natural being, but in addition to natural qualities has spiritual freedom, although this freedom arises only when moral consciousness is fully matured.

In the existential-ontological concept of moral functioning (Veselova, 2003), it is assumed that there is a common human nature expressed in the natural moral law inherent in all people. Everybody can learn this law from their own conscience. However, in the process of socialization, conscience can be suppressed by the moral law of society. As a result, people form their own version of conscience, at a much lower level of development than natural moral law. They may have an intrapersonal conflict in which the requirements of natural moral law, as awareness of the voice of conscience, are suppressed with the help of psychological defenses. Therefore, it is necessary to develop sensitivity of conscience and the ability to overcome psychological defenses, as the way to form a mature personality.

Conclusions

We draw the following conclusions from the results of the study:

1. Two different levels of school psychologists' interaction with their clients are identified, corresponding to various psychological mechanisms of ethical regulation of professional behavior.
2. At the role level, a specialist does not need deep personal involvement in professional interaction with the client; the psychological mechanisms of compliance with ethical standards are knowledge of the ethical code and fear of administrative sanctions for negative consequences.
3. To perform professional duties at the personal level, it is necessary to have internal motivation of moral behavior, providing qualities such as a mature and sensitive conscience and a positive philosophy of life.
4. One can explain moral professional behavior only by considering a person as an integrally functioning subject. Thus the following psychological aspects of personality maturity are important: personal identification with the positive ideals embodying the corresponding ethical principles and world outlook; development of conscience as sensory system in the sphere of morals, setting a level of sensitivity to situations of moral choice defining conformity of individual acts to the image of the moral self; and personal responsibility for one's actions.
5. Understanding the mechanisms of integrated moral functioning will create adequate training programs for students in psychology and ensure the safety of all participants in professional interactions.

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