

Personal Identity of Men During the Midlife Crisis

Kalacheva Irina Alexandrovna^{1*} and Gurova Olga Sergeevna²

¹3rd Year Master Student of the Institute of Humanities, Altai State University, Barnaul, Russia

²Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Social Psychology and Pedagogical Education, Altai State University, Barnaul, Russia

***Corresponding Author:** Kalacheva Irina Alexandrovna, 3rd Year Master Student of the Institute of Humanities, Altai State University, Barnaul, Russia.

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Abstract

The article presents the results of a study of personal identity in men during a midlife crisis. It is shown that there is a rather strong relationship between the status of personal identity and the crisis state in middle-aged men. The data obtained in the article allow us to better understand the content and structure of identity during the midlife crisis.

Keywords: *Personal Identity; Crisis; Age Crisis; Average Age*

The relevance of the problem of personal identity during the period of a person experiencing a midlife crisis in modern conditions of rapid social, technological and other changes is increasing both in connection with theoretical rethinking and in connection with the development of various kinds of psychological assistance programs.

Currently, both domestic and foreign scientists are studying the problem of personal identity, middle age and crisis states. If we interpret "identity" as a concept produced by reflection on the history of a person, the formation of a personality, then its origins are found in the multiple scientific works of V.V. Abramenkova, B. Schleder, M.V. Zakovorotnaya, Ch.Kh. Cooley, E. Erickson, L.B. Schneider and others.

From the point of view of L.B. Schneider, identity is "a multidimensional and integrative psychological phenomenon that provides a person with integrity, identity and certainty, develops in the space of processes of self-determination, self-organization and personalization, and is also determined by the development of reflection under certain conditions" [9].

In turn, M.V. Zakovorotnaya understands identity as "a model of life that allows one to separate the "I" and the surrounding world, to determine the ratio of two dimensions (external and internal) for a person, infinite and finite, to put in order diversity for the purpose of self-realization" [4]. By studying different aspects of identity, some theories state that identity is achieved through different identifications. That is why identity can be defined as a basic foundation or property given from birth, already on the basis of which a person cognizes the world around him.

Approaches to the consideration of age crises and loss of identity are reflected in the works of: E. Fromm, A.A. Urbanovich, M.S. Ivanova.

The problems of the “midlife crisis” of middle-aged men, as a normative crisis of personal life, were studied to a greater extent according to the scientific works of E. Erickson, D.B. Elkonina, D.I. Feldstein.

The relevance of experiences formed by the state of personal identity is manifested in many areas of human life: in sexual, professional, and national (ethnic). Due to the crisis of the identity of a modern person noted by researchers (M.V. Zakovorotnaya [4], P. Gurevich [3]), as well as the tasks of the psychotherapeutic direction that have arisen in connection with this, in the modern world it is relevant to formulate the problem of personal identity, to determine its causes and structures.

The study of the problem of personal identity in men during the midlife crisis is due to the requirements of modern times.

Modern reality, the time of change and the accelerated pace of life require the individual to constantly choose an adequate life strategy that helps maintain the integrity of the internal state and successfully transition to the stage of maturity in the future.

In order to provide psychological support to men who are faced with this problem, it is necessary to study the content and structure of their identity during the midlife crisis.

In this regard, this study is aimed at studying the personal identity of men during the midlife crisis.

The goal is to identify the relationship between statuses and types of personal identity and indicators of a crisis state in middle-aged men.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the study:

- An approach to understanding the personal identity of E. Erickson [11];
- Conceptual provisions on the typology of identity, its components and content, forms of its expression Yu.V. Borodich [1], B. Schaefer [8], L.B. Schneider [9];
- The definition of a personal crisis in the works of A.E. Taras;
- Consideration of the psychological characteristics of middle-aged men in the works of A.A. Urbanovich, O.A. Brown [2], M.S. Yanitsky [10].

Research methods were used: analysis of theoretical sources on the research problem, and surveying, the “MILE” method (L.B. Schneider [9]), the “Who am I?” (M. Kuhn, T. McPartland), determination of the personal profile of the crisis (A.E. Taras, 2003), correlation analysis.

The obtained data were processed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 23 software package for statistical data processing.

The study involved 52 respondents (men) aged 35 to 45 years. According to the age periodization of E. Erickson, men of this group belong to the age category “middle age”. Men from different social groups, with different marital status and different income levels.

As a result of our study, data were obtained on the types of personal identity, where most of the men in the period from 35 to 45 years of age are in the status of “Moratorium” (32.69%). Also, a significant part of the respondents are in the status of “Diffuse identity” (28.87%) and “Premature identity” (19.2%). This enabled us to see the presence of mid-life crises in men.

The main types of identity of men during the midlife crisis, according to average scores, are “Social Self” (35 points) and “Reflexive Self” (35 points). That is, middle-aged men identify (assign) themselves to family affiliation (son, husband, brother, father), to professional position (specialist, doctor, engineer, technician) and to group affiliation (colleague, member of society). Men also note their personal qualities and character traits (good person, interesting, harmful, indecisive).

Less pronounced were such types of identity as “Transcendent Self” (17 points) and “Physical Self” (12 points). That is, least of all men described their physical data (brunette, weak, thin, living person), or described themselves as being outside the body, consciousness (the light of being, the sum of social relations, “someone who is not me”).

The personal profile of the crisis in terms of average scores showed general condition 0.01, functional problems 0.19, complications in cognitive and analytical activity 0.24, impaired emotional response 0.27, depressive mood 0.08, changes in behavior and activity 0.21.

It should be noted that the most pronounced indicators of the crisis state of respondents are violations of emotional response, complications in cognitive-analytical activity, and changes in behavior and activity. Violations of emotional response are expressed either in the generalization of shame, anxiety, guilt, anger, or in emotional dullness and weakness. Complications in cognitive-analytical activity are characterized by difficulties in the work of all cognitive processes (attention, perception, memory, thinking). Changes in activity and behavior, on the one hand, are characterized by either excessive preoccupation with problems, or avoidance of difficulties, on the other hand, by the emergence of problems with the performance of professional duties.

It is likely that the pace and urgency of modern times exert their influence in the form of stress and unmet fundamental needs that affect the sense of self of men aged 35 to 45.

Complications in cognitive-analytical activity and a violation of emotional response affect the occurrence of stressful situations in the life of an individual. As a result, the person probably understands that it is impossible to solve the problem in the usual way. There is a need to change your life at the affective, meaning-forming and behavioral levels. Thus, the individual is in the process of going through a crisis.

In turn, the crisis has a specific effect on the growth of anxiety and a special sense of time, the social development of the individual, the change in the circle of people in a person’s life and the loss of the old identity and the emergence of a new one. There may also be a powerful restructuring of values and the selection of a new life strategy and ways of behavior.

Further, in our correlation analysis, stable links were found between statuses, types of identity and indicators of the personal profile of the crisis.

Thus, it was possible to find out that middle-aged men who are in a specific identity status feel the influence of various components of their own “I”. So, for example, men who are in the status of “Moratorium” feel the influence of such components and factors as: “Physical Self” ($r = 0.390$), “Social Self” ($r = 0.711$), “Reflexive Self” ($r = 0.414$), “Transcendent Self” ($r = 0.778$) and “Complications in cognitive-analytical activity” ($r = 0.425$). The revealed interrelations of the “Moratorium” status with different components of the self- concept show the presence of an experience of crisis and the process of self-examination, as well as the search for a solution to the crisis and the determination of values and guidelines that are significant for a person. It is also possible to note the relationship between the “Social Self” and the “Transcendent Self” with the status of the “Moratorium” identity in almost equal degree, and as you can see, they are opposite components. The less connection with the component “Transcendent Self”, the more pronounced the “Social Self” becomes.

We also found that in the presence of the status of a diffuse identity, there are connections with the “Transcendent Self” ($r = 0.324$) and “Changes in behavior and activity” ($r = 0.432$). It can be noted that men who are in the “Diffuse identity” status have features of loss, where a person loses interest in both his own “I” and his inner world. He also experiences an internal conflict in the form of low self-esteem,

self-doubt, dissatisfaction with himself, as a result of which a person attempts to find an answer to all questions through such concepts as “I am what I really am”, “I am out of consciousness and “I am infinite”.

In the presence of a premature identity (that is, an “imposed” identity), men face functional problems ($r = +0.457$) and changes in behavior and activities ($r = 0.349$). The identified relationship can be explained by a set of beliefs and values that a person has acquired from the outside (due to identification with parents, friends, colleagues). Therefore, it is acceptable to expect that in a person who has entered middle age and has not yet identified or lost identification, this causes disturbances in the whole organism. There are problems in the functioning of the nervous, respiratory, digestive systems of the body, as well as changes in behavior and activity. After all, such a status of identity is unstable and does not withstand a collision with modern reality.

From this it follows that, according to the data obtained, the average age in men passes with fairly pronounced symptoms of a crisis. But we note that a large percentage of men are trying to overcome the difficulties they face in everyday life and in society.

Conclusion

On the basis of the statuses and types of identity identified in the empirical study, it is possible to develop programs for providing psychological assistance to men during a midlife crisis. Varieties of assistance in psychological counseling can be carried out in different forms. In family, group and individual counseling.

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