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**THE ISSUE OF ECOLOGICAL VALIDITY
OF THE TEST “PERSONALITY LIFE SUPPORT LOCUS”***

SUMMARY. The article presents the methodological framework and empirical study of the personality life sustaining system (PLSS). It considers the levels of PLSS (types of responding to life difficulties). It specifies the basic characteristics of psychodiagnostic methods that are partially used to define the personality life sustaining locus, and demonstrates the necessity of developing methods that would aim at defining the personality life sustaining locus. In order to prove the ecological validity of the “personality life sustaining locus” methods, a client’s psychological examination and counseling were carried out. The sibling versions of the methods gave contradicting results. The article touches upon the possible reasons why the results of the tests can differ. It presents the critical analysis and the hypothesis assuming that the differences in the tests are determined by the different subject focus of methods.

KEY WORDS. Personality life sustaining system. Psycho-diagnostics. Test validity. Psychological counseling.

The life support system of a person (LSSP) is meant to provide personal safety, adaptation and psychological development. Its conception was designed by M.V.Bogdanova and E.L.Dotsenko [1]. In order to empirically test the existence and interaction of the defined LSSP levels (psychosomatic response, mental defense, coping and personal resources), the “Life support locus” method was created. It has “sibling” versions [2]: a questionnaire and a projective method. The new method was created because the existing ones are focused on the certain LSSP levels and have the following characteristics: 1. They diagnose separate qualities of a person (control locus [3], temperament [4], anxiety [5]; [6] and so on), but do not explain (at least on an empirical level) why such a personality profile has been formed. 2. They define a set of qualities or defensive-adaptive resources (life-meaning orientations [7], personal adaptive potential [8]), but ignore the extreme forms – psychosomatic diseases or personal maturity.

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The questionnaire "Life support locus" comprises 56 questions. Each of them refers to the definite level of LSSP and estimates the "contribution" of this level to an individual LSSP. The method was tested according to the following psychometric criteria: difficulty index, discriminatory power index, factor analysis to define construct validity. Ecological validity was not tested. The pilot test of the method confirmed the hypothesis that LSSP of every person is individual, and the differences are detected in the hierarchy of the primary and secondary levels of the system [2].

At present the projective version of the method is being studied. The version was developed due to the existence of the inner dynamics in the defensive-adaptive mechanisms and difficulty to diagnose them with the help of questionnaires [9]. In order to define the LSSP system more distinctly, it is necessary to study its dynamics. A person's response at the moment of facing a difficulty may be diametrically opposite to the one he/she will reveal in several minutes or days. The response is different because a situation may unfold on the "inner stage" for several times. Thus, the attitude towards it can also change.

The method consists of 20 described difficult life situations which are designed to elicit a testee's projection. The specific details of the situation are intentionally omitted and the outcome is not predetermined. A testee is asked to describe his or her responses to the situations within three time lines: immediately at the moment of the situation, then at the moment of "seeing it in a different light" and when the situation is over. The construct validity of the method was evaluated by experts. The ecological validity was not tested.

The ecological validity is one of the significant criteria to make a test comply with the test standards of the psychological community. The ecological validity provides reliability and scalability of the results in the natural environment. That is why a method with the high ecological validity will be more popular among psychologists in their practice.

The objective of study is to evaluate the ecological (subject) validity of the sibling versions of the method "Life support locus" by comparing the results of both versions with the data, received in the process of psychological counseling of one of the testees.

The results. According to the results of both versions of the method, the client mainly uses coping strategies. The results on psychological defenses and higher personal resources (HPR) are contradictory. The questionnaire demonstrates that the psychological defenses are practically non-existent (5%), while the projective version shows they are quite spread (30%), almost like copings (45%). In the questionnaire the results of HPR (36%), immediately follow coping strategies (43%), while in the projective version they are poorly demonstrated (15%). The results of the both tests show that the level of psychosomatic response is the least pronounced one (table 1).

Table 1

LSSP Level Distribution of Defensive Strategies of a Testee

LSSP level \ Test version	Questionnaire	Projective version
Psychosomatic response	16%	10%
Psychic defense	5%	30%
Coping strategies	43%	45%
Higher personal resources	36%	15%

Counseling description.

The client. Olesya, 30 years old. Higher education. Married for 10 years. Has three children. Works as an instructor in a real estate agency. At the first session she appears to be a calm, smiley girl interested in the counseling. Somatic complaints: occasional stomach aches and rapid heartbeat.

The client's profile. Olesya applied to a counselor because she felt confused, was reluctant to do anything, depressed. At the first session we concluded that this state was connected with the difficulty to find the meaning of life. In LSSP theory it is understood as a task for an action, when it is necessary to make a choice using the level of the higher personal resources which doesn't provide ready-made solutions.

Olesya believes that this state of mind was caused by her fourth child's death, she explains that at that time she realized that her child had died and it might happen again. Olesya would like to have more than five children. Realizing the danger of a possible death of another child, she has made up her mind not to have children for a while. At that moment Olesya described her state in the following way: "I seemed to have had the purpose (to enlarge my family), but now it is impossible".

Her father committed a suicide when she was 6 years old. Most of his life he had been imprisoned and they only spent a couple of years together. Her mother died from alcohol intoxication. It happened at night while Olesya was sleeping in the same room. Then the girl moved to her grandmother who was very tough on her and, in her personal opinion, emotionally rejected her. We have combined the situations of her parents' death in her early age, her desire to have children and her search for the meaning of life, and formed the hypothesis that Olesya had not got enough emotional feedback from her parents in childhood, and besides their deaths were unexpected for her. In the process of analyzing her memories Olesya described the situation at her father's funeral, when she felt completely "abandoned, empty, lost and afraid". She had the similar feelings when her mother and her child died. Now in adulthood, the desire to have children can be considered as a psychic defense, creating symbolic environment of calmness and emotional acceptance, which is contrary to the one she had when she lost her close people. At the second session this interpretation was approved.

Olesya manifests her psychic defense while rationalizing her experience related to secret desires and aggression. Being asked what she defends herself against, she says "I fear to learn something shocking about myself that will differ from my current ideas; and that all the things valuable for me now (my family) will become worthless".

There is also a fusion-type defense. At first, she was eager to talk to the psychologist not only during the sessions, but also on the telephone discussing both, the topics related to the counseling and more informal ones. Olesya described it as “developing addiction”. It is also notable that her mood changes depended on the environment.

In the process of counseling Olesya revealed more and more urge for self-expression, getting the meaning of life and self-awareness. But her desires conflicted with the idea that her husband wouldn't support such initiatives: “I don't think that he will put up with a wife who loves freedom and her achievements, and who will not always take his choices and opinions into consideration”. The unconscious idea later became conscious: if I behave as I want to, my husband will leave me (if not physically, then morally). It is connected with the situations of the previous losses. Before that, she preferred to sacrifice her longings, so that her husband liked her decisions. Here is the pattern of a psychosomatic response – avoiding expressing disagreement and confrontation [10]. Eventually, Olesya started to ask her husband for support, thus developing her coping strategies. The coping strategies were also revealed in her readiness to stand up for her interests. During counseling she was aware of the psychic defense and tried to decrease its influence.

The lack of the higher personal resources regulation becomes evident due to the following statements about the psychological changes: “I have never feel so calm”, “I feel as if I wanted it all my life”, “I feel so free”, “as if the feelings hidden inside, suddenly broke out”.

Consequently, the client faces a task for an action related to HPR. But due to the fact that her decision is not ready yet, the simpler life support levels come up and start working.

Discussion: as a result of the three ways of study (life support locus test: a questionnaire, a projective part and a discussion in psychological counseling) it was confirmed that the coping behavior plays a very important role in the client's LSSP, while the psychosomatic response is not so prominent. There is a contradiction between the two distant levels – psychic defense and HPR. It should be noted that the client's request referred to the level that showed unstable results in the test. Due to the fact that the results are very contradictory, a quick reading gives an impression that the tests were done by two different people.

A few reasons for such contradictory results are possible:

Pursuit of the socially approved behavior. We do not tend to consider the influence of this factor due to the following reasons: a) before completing the test the client and the counselor entered into trust-based relations that encouraged sincere answers; b) the client initiated counseling herself and was willing to resolve her difficulties; c) there is no evidence of LSSP being artificially embellished.

Psychic defense prevents the client from accepting her problem (difficulty in finding the meaning of life) and simulates general development, positive attitude to life and HPR prevalence. Such a supposition can be true for the psychic defense. In particular, the questionnaire data show that the client almost doesn't apply psychic defense (5%), while the projective version reveal that she often uses it (30%). However,

this supposition can't explain the difference in the results on the HPR scales (questionnaire 36%, projective version 15%), as in this case the psychic defense is supposed to work, but it actually doesn't. Consequently, there is a need for further explanation.

Different subject matter of the tests, i.e. tests are focused on various semantic levels of subjective experience constructing.

In other words, in the questionnaire the client presented her conscious ideas about herself, those embodied in the Self-conception (worldview level according E.L. Dotsenko). The questionnaire showed that her life is good; she successfully copes with difficulties (copings), deals with the traumatic events in her life (psychic defense), treats difficulties philosophically and pursues personal development (HPR), unlike other people. Meanwhile, the projective method deals with the basic, unconscious and implicit assumptions of a person about the world and oneself. According to this logic, if there are no basic assumptions in the conscience, then there are no particular difficulties in life, and a person follows the way of development (the results shown by the questionnaire).

Consequently, the difference in the results is not due to the pursuit of approval. It is implicitly influenced by the psychic defense, and, what is more important, by different ideas of a person about the world and oneself (conscious and unconscious). In the process of study, the questionnaire reveals person's conscious knowledge about him\herself, while the projective method shows his/her unconscious assumptions.

The basic assumption of the client was revealed in her two statements: "It is impossible to love me" and "I have nothing to be loved for". This assumption proved to be basic because the client realized it in the form of the insight, i.e. unexpectedly, not in the process of the logical reflection or counseling session, but the day before it and it was accompanied with a strong emotional response. The critical consideration of such a belief and the disengagement from it resulted in the client's urge for self-expression, establishment of emotional links in the family, change of her life and daring to get aware of her secret dreams and fancies.

Conclusions.

Empirical testing of the theoretical concept "life support system of a person" was carried out via creation and validation of the two versions of the "Life support locus" method. Both versions proved the possibility to distinguish the LSSP levels, define the primary and secondary levels, as well as to elicit the individual dynamics of the defensive response.

The ecological validity of the sibling versions of the "Life support locus" method was tested in the process of the psychological counseling, during which it was possible to confirm the results, to find the explanations for the "contradictions" (different results in different method versions), to make sure that dealing with problems with the help of LSSP gives positive results.

Divergence of the sibling versions results of the "Life support locus" method is the result of the different subject matters of the versions, i.e. their focus on different semantic levels of one's subjective experience constructing.

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