

SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF PREVENIENT PART OF JOINT ACTIVITIES IN YOUTH SMALL GROUPS

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Abstract

The paper deals with research results of prevenient part of joint activity in youth groups. The objective of research was to study that phenomenon as a group process of preparation for joint activity which defines its productivity. Methods of observation and device «Arch» were applied to study three youth small groups in summer camp located in Krasnodar region. It was empirically established that youth groups subject to the level of orderliness are different in performing both prevenient and executive parts of joint activity. The research confirmed the data received in the groups working in extreme conditions of joint activity and revealed the leading role of group leadership in the prevenient part of joint activity.

Key words: *small group, group dynamics, leadership, prevenient part of joint activity, executive part of joint activity, orderliness.*

Introduction

The problem of small groups occupies the central place in social psychology. The small group is defined as the initial cell of a society forming social structure and realizing social relations at a microlevel (Андреева, 2007; Крысько, 2003). It's especially important to study small group as a subject of joint activity.

In the laboratory of social and economic psychology of Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences on the base of investigation of joint labor activity the model of group as a subject of joint activity has been worked out. Within of the system approach in psychology of labor collective (Журавлев, 1988) the thesis of plurality of communication forms and relations in the labor collective which is to be treated as the subject of joint activity, dialogue and interpersonal relations was proposed. The similar direction in research of small groups is performed by psychologists of Kursk State University based upon the conception of group orderliness (Чернышев, 1980). In interpersonal interaction the person obtains some new socio-psychological features that form the basis of a group as the subject of activity. To become the whole the group itself should, first of all be organized. It results in new characteristics of group activity: its adequacy to social process, its «cost» for the society, etc. (Ломов, 1984).

Modern psychological literature considers orderliness as organization's ability to keep stability of the structure during enrichment and dynamism of its functions. It determines the nature of dependence between the organization and social milieu: the higher orderliness level the greater independence of organization the more relative and flexible, its dependence from milieu becomes.

Simultaneously the dependence of milieu from the organization raises significantly (Петрушенко, 1975; Сетров, 1972).

At the level of behavior, orderliness is revealed as group's capacity to self-organizing in a situation of uncertainty, as a combination of variety of opinions and forms of initiative behavior with steady unity of actions of its participants to achieve common aims. Theoretically orderliness displays as structure of organizational of group properties: orientations of activity, self-controllability, leadership, unity of actions, stress steadiness, intergroup unity (Чернышев, Лунев, Сарычев, 2005). These properties determine a direction inside group and intergroup processes through:

- a actualization useful for the group personal qualities of group members;
- a concentration of the group's activity on tasks which appear to be important at present or in the perspective.

Implication and actualization of the group members in joint activity suppose actualization of orientation act (organizational self-determination) and group estimation as psychological mechanisms. It was A. Makarenko who in 1920s established that without individual and collective's ability for orientation their organization was impossible (Макаренко, 1960). All that makes promising the study of a preventive part of joint group's activity and its influence on productivity. There are some variants of interpretation of orientation known to the humanities. According to I. Pavlov the preventive (orientation) reflex is a complex of reactions of organism in reply to novelty of stimulus, i.e. it is only a physiological process (Павлов, 1964). According to P. Galperin psychological orientation starts to operate when there is not any ready mechanism for successful decision of tasks (Гальперин, 2002). We are interpreting orientation (or preventive part of joint activity) as a group process of preparation for joint activity which defines its productivity.

While planning the research we assumed that productivity of joint activity and the organization of interaction of members of the group was defined by features of the preventive part of forthcoming joint activity.

Methodology of Research

General characteristics of an experiment

To study the preventive part of groups' joint activity we used observation method (Шапарь, 2006) and the device «Arch» (Сарычев, Чернышев, 2009) for measuring the following parameters: time spent for orientation, time spent for execution; the maintenance of preventive part of joint activity; verbal reactions during preventive and executive parts of joint activity. That parameters constituted independent variables. As an independent variable groups' level of orderliness was used.

Instrument

Device «Arch» is an apparatus model of the group task demanding amicable, coordinated, practical action of group including from 2 up to 20 people. It's used to study such group properties as leadership, motivation and psychological mood of group for joint activity. That device is a kind of arch-shaped mountable-and-dismountable construction consisting of thirty one elements („bricks”) and fastening rim. Each element is numbered and abut with other ones by means of pins and holes situated in different ways. The task is considered to be fulfilled when the tested group locks the fastening rim over the mounted construction.

The youth groups from the Adygea Republic „Adygea” and „Zori Kavkaza” and the youth group “Astrakhan” from the Astrakhan region took part in an experimental research during a summer camp “Zhemchuzhina moray” held in the settlement of Kabardinka (the Krasnodar region). These groups manifested a high level of the activity in summer camp. The members’ age was 14–16 years, among them there were 14 girls and 10 young men. The groups were set up «Arch» in conditions of isolation, carrying out the procedures which were becoming more complicated from stage to stage (trial procedure, «Arch» setting-up in usual conditions, with the announcement of time spent, with fixing a leading hand of all the members of group, “for the record”). The procedures became more and more complicated in order to watch changes in planning of prevenient and executive parts of the groups’ joint activity. While accomplishing the joint activity by the groups studied an interactive coordination which included presence and quality of the plan, coordination and distribution of functions and correspondence of joint activity to the plan were supervised.

Data analysis

Quantitative assessment of group’s task performed as quotient of division time spent to mount the “Arch” to standard time. As each procedure performed no less than seven times we compute its average value. To define difference between groups’ parameters we applied nonparametric sign test.

Results of Research

The group “Astrakhan” began active experimental procedures with the “Arch”, having categorically refused from the working out a preliminary plan of joint activity in trial attempt saying: “No one will be able to remember it”. During the construction of the “Arch” in usual (standard) conditions in prevenient part joint activity the plan has been developed, but the group followed it in execution only partly. The mistakes admitted by the members of the group in the middle of procedure finally led to the destruction of the «Arch». In further procedures joint activity developed spontaneously, prevenient part was absent. The leader focused the members of the group and directed their actions during the construction. After his isolation the group did not cope with the task, and the “Arch” feel down again. Estimating the interactive coordination in the group we did observe its low level. In spite of the fact that tasks were changing the plan of action did not vary or was totally absent. These tendencies are typical of groups with a low level of orderliness.

The group “Adygea” showed interest in forthcoming joint activity, having commented: “It is great”. That group worked with the big enthusiasm during all experimental procedures. In prevenient part of activity in standard procedure the precise plan had been produced by the group and functions of each member of the group were allocated. During assembly of the “Arch” the group followed to the produced plan. While carrying out the further procedures the group worked strictly according to the plan that had been proposed beforehand. Tactics varied on “a course of an affair” alongside with mutual aid and support of the members of the group. The members of the group explained their low productivity by slow work and absence of sharpness and clearness of motions instead of developing and analyzing the plan of joint actions. These tendencies in coordination of actions are typical of average level of group interaction.

Table 1. Quantitative estimation of performance of tests on "Arch" (average values).

Procedure	Groups					
	"Adygea"		"Zori Kavkaza"		"Astrakhan"	
	Time spent on execution (seconds)	Productivity quotient	Time spent on execution (seconds)	Productivity quotient	Time spent on execution (seconds)	Productivity quotient
Standard procedure	55	0,35	45	0,42	73	0,26
Time count procedure (every 5 seconds)	37	0,43	43	0,37	69	0,23
"Fixing leading hand" procedure	61	0,36	47	0,47	49	0,45
"On a record" procedure	45	0,38	35	0,49	36	0,47

The group "Zori Kavkaza" started performing of joint activity with interest. The precise plan of action before trial procedure had been developed. The group worked similarly in standard experimental procedure. While "fixing leading hand" procedure the group members changed and corrected their actions on the spot. The group cardinally changed the plan during preventive part of joint activity in procedure with isolation of one of the group member allocating his functions among the rest of the participants. Before the procedure "on a record" the members of the group had carefully analyzed the plan of actions and brought the correct amendments wishing to take one more attempt to check themselves. As a result the parameters of the group interaction level in all procedures were the highest. It should be noted that difference between measured parameters of dependent variable are significant statistically ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2. Average time spent on preventive part of joint activity by each group (seconds).

Groups	Average time spent on preventive part of joint activity (seconds)
"Adygea"	10
"Zori Kavkaza"	16
"Astrakhan"	5

Discussion

The analysis of the data obtained by us revealed interrelation between preventive and execution parts of joint activity. High qualitative planning forthcoming execution part of joint activity leads to the raise of productivity as a whole. The absence of preventive part (orientation) in joint activity productivity results in low efficiency of the group.

The members of groups of high level of orderliness emphasize the coordination of joint actions carefully developing the plan of forthcoming joint activity. The preventive part of joint activity in such groups has the greater «specific weight» in comparison with the executive part. The substantial side of the plan of joint activity was its adequacy to conditions and situation. Such plan is characterized by a careful distribution of functions, ability of each group member to prove carefully expediency of the distribution of functions and stability. The important role in the coordination of joint actions was played by the leaders of the groups of high level of orderliness.

The increase in densities of the preventient part of joint activity was typical of the average level of orderliness groups as well as of highly organized groups. These groups were used to decrease the quality of the joint activity plan due to the often reference to “standard receptions” amplifying conventionality due to the fact that the members of such groups frequently “do not see” changes of a situation. If they notice such changes they do not estimate its novelty and new quality of situation.

In groups of average level of orderliness prevalence of an executive part of joint activity over preventient part is inherent. In intense conditions as compared with optimum ones densities of orientation in structure of joint activity were reducing. The plan of forthcoming joint activity in the groups of that type is either totally absent or it is of poor quality.

Conclusion

The analysis of data obtained in small youth groups’ research revealed correlation between the style of performing of preventient and executive parts of the joint activity. The high-quality planning of impending group’s activity makes it possible to raise its effectiveness otherwise joint activity effectiveness is lowering. The duration and quality of preventient part of the joint activity is determined by group’s orderliness. The research in the youth groups confirmed the data received in the groups working in extreme conditions of joint activity (Чернышев, Лунев, Сарычев, 2005) and revealed the leading role of group leadership in the preventient part of joint activity.

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