

ON STUDENT UNDERSTANDING OF SELF-ISOLATION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

SOBRE ENTENDIMENTO DO ESTUDANTE DO AUTOISOLAMENTO DURANTE A PANDEMIA DO CORONAVÍRUS

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Abstract: The relevance of this work is determined by the need to study student understanding of self-isolation during the coronavirus pandemic. The purpose of the research is to study the peculiarities of student understanding of self-isolation during the quarantine period. We conduct a questionnaire using Google Forms, which allows us to effectively investigate the peculiarities of understanding self-isolation during the coronavirus pandemic. As a result of the study, the paper examines the level of student understanding of self-isolation; we reveal the level of student understanding of the value of communication with family and friends. The research's novelty and originality lie in the fact that it is the first attempt to reveal the significance of student understanding of self-isolation. We determine that in the process of self-isolation, most students acquire new knowledge through the actualization of knowledge about themselves and their place in the world.

Keywords: understanding of self-isolation; master's students; self-isolation; coronavirus pandemic.

Resumo: A relevância deste trabalho é determinada pela necessidade de estudar a compreensão dos alunos sobre o auto-isolamento durante a pandemia do coronavírus. O objetivo da pesquisa é estudar as peculiaridades da compreensão do aluno sobre o auto-isolamento durante o período de quarentena. Conduzimos um questionário usando o Formulários Google, que nos permite investigar com eficácia as peculiaridades da compreensão do auto-isolamento durante a pandemia de coronavírus. Como resultado do estudo, o artigo examina o nível de compreensão do aluno sobre o auto-isolamento; revelamos o nível de compreensão do aluno sobre o valor da comunicação com a família e amigos. A novidade e originalidade da pesquisa residem no fato de que é a primeira tentativa de revelar o significado da compreensão do aluno sobre o auto-isolamento. Determinamos que, no processo de auto-isolamento, a maioria dos alunos adquire novos conhecimentos por meio da atualização do conhecimento sobre si mesmos e seu lugar no mundo.

Palavras-chave: compreensão do auto-isolamento; alunos de mestrado; isolamento voluntário; pandemia do coronavírus.

Introduction

Every person has both positive and negative moments in their life, with the negative ones being tough to avoid in situations connected with stress, fear, or uncertainty. Forced self-isolation could be an example of such a situation (Usak et al., 2020). During the time of self-isolation, personal contacts of an individual or a group of individuals can be limited from others; communication occurs only indirectly (by phone, Skype, messengers, etc.); and the foundations and the previous ways of life are changing. This leads to the formation of new mechanisms of adaptation and an increase in the role of self-knowledge processes. Self-knowledge is the process of (1) gaining knowledge about oneself by distinguishing oneself from others, (2) identification and separation of oneself from other people by comparing oneself with them and with oneself in the past, present, or distant future (Sorokoumova, 2012). There are two most used interpretations of the term “understanding” in philosophy. The first interprets understanding in an ordinary sense, i.e., without clear differentiation of notions, such as reason, intellect, concept, cognition, and explanation. The second interpretation of understanding refers to a special problem associated with the penetration into other people’s spiritual worlds, i.e., understanding is considered in the context of subject-subject relations (Wittgenstein, 1994). An individual needs to express his individuality in a general sense. But since this is not possible in concepts, in publicly available conceptual schemes, such an expression becomes the task of art and science and is still not completely attainable (Osnitsky, 1996; Petrovsky, 1996; Cherdymova et al., 2018; Sorokoumova, 1995; Tsabolova et al., 2019). Intelligence, in order to be an effective regulator of the organized, instinctive self, should be available to individuals as a means of their consolidation and the basis of communication. But this is possible only with the help of a symbol, which is always an organ but taken not by itself but as the carrier, representative, and expression of reason. (Vygotsky, 1984; Lomov, 1980; Zhinkin, 1966; Markova, 1974)

The process of understanding is carried out in two orthodox dimensions. In the first, vertical dimension, there is a transition from a misunderstanding (i.e., from what is not understood, not reflected in the concept) to an understanding to the process of forming concepts (Toulmin, 1984). This process is infinite since both the object and the subject of understanding have infinitely many properties and characteristics. For the understanding subject, this is expressed in the possibility of variations and choices/formations of meanings; and for the object of understanding – in the availability of an unlimited number of properties to be fixed. In the second, horizontal dimension, there is a process of understanding by an individual of concepts that have already been formed in the consciousness (Zakharova, 1977; Guruzhapov, 1995; Znakov, 2007; Sorokoumova, 1995). In the difficult conditions of self-isolation, this process can become more pronounced. All of these characteristics of the process of understanding appear more clearly; understanding is considered not as a final act in the form of a list of concepts a continuous process.

The problem of understanding is closely related to the problem of formation and development of human consciousness. Consciousness is the highest form of reflection of objective reality peculiar only to a human, a way of his attitude to the world and to himself, mediated by universal forms of human socio-historical activity (Sorokoumova et al., 2019; Cherdymova et al., 2019). The main role of consciousness belongs to thinking that is possible only in language expression. Any sensory image of an object, any sensation or representation, is a part of consciousness since they have certain meanings. Knowledge and meanings are stored in the language. They direct and differentiate our feelings, wills, attention, and other mental acts, unifying them into a single consciousness.

In psychological terms, consciousness is real, first of all, as a process of a person’s awareness of the world around him and of himself. The presence of consciousness means that a person has formed or is forming a system of generalized knowledge, objectified in words. He can become aware of the environment and himself and recognize the phenomena of reality through their relationship with this knowledge. The process of awareness of the world and oneself remains the central psychological problem in this case. While consciousness regulates the behavior by bringing it following people’s needs and the objective conditions in which the

behavior is performed. Consciousness is a reflection in the human brain of reality based on social practice (Machnev & Cardiova, 2019; Yudina, 2004; Kargapoltseva et al., 2019).

Consciousness consists of the following main components: (1) attention, which can be arbitrary, in which the object of attention can be any object by itself, and involuntary, in which the object of attention is a certain (selected) object; (2) perceptual actions, which can also be arbitrary and involuntary. Arbitrary perception requires a certain internal action, an act of effort, which is recognized as a consequence of arbitrary attention. Thus, consciousness always contains an awareness of a certain effort and attention.

Note that the problem of self-knowledge in Russian psychology is still a matter of theoretical science. Therefore, most of the subjects and courses aim to learn about the world around us, but not about the person in this world. We pay special attention to the practice of self-knowledge in educational activities using the psychological mechanism of understanding. On the one hand, understanding is a process, and on the other – the result of generating, finding, and interpreting the personal meanings of subjects of interaction and communication. Understanding the relationship between cognitive and personal-semantic aspects is a psychological mechanism that provides a regulatory function of self-knowledge development (Gusev, 2002).

Materials and Methods

Our research's problem field is determined by the fact that today, during the coronavirus pandemic, people are forced to sit at home in a confined space in the self-isolation mode. New living conditions suggest that students need to learn new mechanisms of adaptation to the situation (Temnova & Trukhacheva, 2011). Many young people do not have a personal psychological space in their home, which is an additional factor that causes stress. However, student involvement in the virtual space can act as a stabilizing factor (Puchkova, 2018). The main goal of the study is to identify the peculiarities of understanding self-isolation during the coronavirus pandemic. At the end of April 2020, we conducted a questionnaire "Understanding the situation of self-isolation during the COVID19 pandemic." The sample was made up of 72 students (34 males and 38 female), studying in Moscow Pedagogical State University and Samara (Samara State University). The sample included students belonging to two age groups: Group 1 (bachelor students) "youth period," from 17 years to 21 years (33 people, average age = 18.6); Group 2 (master students) "mature age," from 22 years to 35 years (39 people, average age = 27.9).

We conducted the survey anonymously using Google Forms. The respondents were asked to answer questions using the following instructions: "We ask you to take part in a survey on self-isolation. Self-isolation refers to various restrictive measures for the government's population for a certain time period to combat the spread of the COVID19 pandemic. Read the statement and choose the answer (Yes, Don't Know, No). Please indicate your gender and age."

The questionnaire contains 15 questions evenly distributed on three blocks: Block 1 "Understanding the situation of self-isolation"; Block 2 "Understanding oneself during self-isolation"; Block 3 "Understanding the peculiarities of interaction and communication during self-isolation." The maximum value for each block is 10 points. The questionnaire blocks form an "integrative indicator of understanding the situation of self-isolation," which has a distribution on low, medium, and high levels.

Block 1. Understanding the social situation of self-isolation

- 1.1. I agree with the situation of self-isolation during the quarantine period.
- 1.2. I understand the need for self-isolation in the coronavirus quarantine.
- 1.3. Self-isolation is the only way to avoid being infected by COVID19.
- 1.4. Mass media reports the actual information about COVID19.
- 1.5. The purpose of social self-isolation is not to get sick.

Block 2. Understanding oneself during social isolation

- 2.1. I am physically healthy, and I do not need self-isolation.
- 2.2. I am willing to be a volunteer and help others.
- 2.3. I improve my professional skills during self-isolation.
- 2.4. I improve my cultural level during self-isolation.
- 2.5. I learn a lot about myself during self-isolation.

Block 3. Understanding the peculiarities of interaction and communication during self-isolation

- 3.1. I communicate with my friends and relatives via the Internet.
- 3.2. I worry about being separated from my friends and family.
- 3.3. I lack enough direct communication with my friends and family.
- 3.4. Self-isolation helps better understand the value of communication and interaction with friends and family.
- 3.5. Self-isolation did not affect my communication with colleagues and friends.

The integrative criterion for understanding the social situation of interaction and communication is the depth of understanding, which depends on the level of mental development, knowledge, and experience of communication and interaction, the level of self-esteem, the level of generalization of knowledge about the world, about other people, and oneself.

A low level corresponds to a lack of understanding of the situation of social self-isolation due to a lack of knowledge and the ability to generalize and evaluate the knowledge received.

An average level corresponds to an understanding of all elements of the situation of social self-isolation due to the increased need to generalize the knowledge received and to carry out self-assessment on their basis.

A high level corresponds to the understanding of the general meaning of the situation of self-isolation based on the generalization of all available knowledge about the world, about other people and oneself, the generation and interpretation of new personal meanings in the process of interaction and communication.

Results and Discussion

The survey results are presented in the form of primary quantitative processing (Table 1) and processing using mathematical statistics methods (quantitative analysis using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test; Spearman rank correlation coefficient).

Table 1. Results of quantitative processing of survey results (n=72).

Block	Statement	Answers (%)
Block 1. Understanding the situation of self-isolation	I agree with the need for self-isolation during the COVID19 pandemic	92
	I understand the need for self-isolation in the coronavirus quarantine	93
	Self-isolation is the only way to avoid being infected by COVID19	60
	Mass media reports the actual information about COVID19	27
	The purpose of social self-isolation is not to get sick	73

Block 2. Understanding oneself during social isolation	I am physically healthy and I do not need self-isolation	43
	I am willing to be a volunteer and help others	41
	I improve my professional skills during self-isolation	78
	I improve my cultural level during self-isolation	71
	I learn a lot about myself during self-isolation	60
Block 3. Understanding the peculiarities of interaction and communication during self-isolation	I communicate with my friends and relatives via the Internet	66
	3.2. I worry about being separated from my friends and family	60
	3.3. I lack enough direct communication with my friends and family	71
	3.4. Self-isolation helps better understand the value of communication and interaction with friends and family	83
	3.5. Self-isolation did not affect my communication with colleagues and friends	49
Integrative indicator		64.4

In Block 1 “Understanding of the situation of self-isolation,” respondents demonstrated a fairly high level: 79% of respondents agree with the need for self-isolation and consider it an effective way to prevent the incidence of COVID19; the average score is 1.6 out of 2 points, which is 80%.

In Block 2 “Understanding oneself during social isolation,” the most pronounced responses were about improving professional and cultural levels; the average score is 1.2 out of 2 points, which is 60%.

In Block 3 “Understanding the peculiarities of interaction and communication during self-isolation,” the highest percentage of respondents noted understanding of the value of communication with family and friends; the average score is 1.3 out of 2 points, which is 65%.

The resulting integrative index (64.4%) corresponds to the average level of understanding of the set of elements of the situation of self-isolation.

We looked for significant differences between the groups of respondents, separated by age. As a hypothesis, we suggested that the respondents of “mature age” had a higher level of understanding of the situation of self-isolation than the respondents of the “youth period.” The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results for searching for differences between “mature age” and “youth period” groups.

#	Block	U	Result
1	Block 1	621,5	Statistically insignificant
2	Block 2	576,5	Statistically insignificant
3	Block 3	421,5	Statistically significant
4	Integrative indicator	517,5	Statistically insignificant

According to Block 1 “Understanding of the situation of self-isolation,” it was not possible to establish statistically significant differences between the respondents of “mature age” and “youth period”: both groups understand equally well the need for self-isolation.

There are no statistically significant differences for Block 2 “Understanding oneself during social isolation”: the respondents of “mature age” and “youth period” show the same readiness to be volunteers and to improve their professional and cultural levels in the situation of self-isolation.

We found statistically significant differences for Block 3 “Understanding the peculiarities of interaction and communication during self-isolation”: the respondents of “mature age” have a higher level of understanding of the peculiarities of interaction and communication in a situation of self-isolation compared to the respondents of “youth period.”

There are no statistically significant differences in the level of the integral indicator. The respondents of both age groups have the same level of understanding of the entire set of elements in the situation of self-isolation: they understand the need for self-isolation, they realize their potential, and they strive to communicate and interact with family and friends.

We searched for correlations between the blocks of the questionnaire by taking into account the respondents’ age. The correlation analysis did not reveal any connection between the various structural components of understanding the situation of self-isolation in the age group from 16 to 21 years, reaching the level of statistical significance, as well as in the age group from 22 to 35 years. The results of searching for correlations are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Results for searching for correlations (n=72).

#	Block	Block 2	Block 3
1	Block 1	rs = 0.268 the correlation is statistically significant	rs = 0.14 does not reach the level of statistical significance
2	Block 2		rs = -0.041 does not reach the level of statistical significance

We found a statistically significant correlation between Block 1 “Understanding of the situation of self-isolation,” and Block 2 “Understanding oneself during social isolation.” This means that the better the respondents understand the need for self-isolation, the better they understand the changes taking place in their inner self in self-isolation.

Conclusion

The study of understanding in Russian psychological science has its own specifics, which is manifested by the fact that the greatest attention has traditionally been paid to the process of learning when working on the understanding of texts. Thus, language plays a leading role in the implementation of understanding to communicate between people. In this regard, psychologists distinguish between understanding of verbal and nonverbal information. A great contribution to the study of the problem of understanding was made by the Russian psychologists studying the understanding processes’ peculiarities. They identify stages and levels of understanding, patterns of formation and development of understanding processes, and peculiarities of understanding. The idea of understanding as a process of active reflection of the surrounding reality, which is an important component of knowledge, unifies works of the leading Russian psychologists on the specific psychological problem of understanding.

We pay special attention to student understanding of the situation of self-isolation. Understanding the process of self-isolation is emotional and is experienced by an individual. The processes of understanding are diverse and peculiar. The activity in a coronavirus pandemic aims to acquire new knowledge about the world and master the surrounding reality, updating knowledge about oneself and one’s place in the world around. All these processes create a basis for a common semantic field and generate new personal meanings. Therefore, the processes of understanding always reflect, to a certain extent, the personality as a whole. The processes of understanding are determined by the level of development of an individual, its individual properties, and life experience.

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