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Basic Assumptions as Predictors of Interpersonal Tolerance and Ethnic Identity in Psychology Students

Kozhukhar Galina *

Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, ul. Sretenka, 29, Moscow, 127051, Russia

Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the correlation between world assumptions and different kinds of tolerance and ethnic identity to other people in psychology students. The data were collected on 97 students. Participants completed the questionnaires: World Assumptions Scale, The Tolerance Index, and Types of ethnic identity. The regression results showed that several world assumptions influence the tolerance index; some assumptions influence various types of ethnic identity. It was revealed that the increased tolerance index was associated with the rise of benevolence of the impersonal world and general meaningfulness of the world; with the decrease of justice. The normal identity is negatively determined by justice. The general assumptions as predictors of different types of ethnic tolerances were benevolence of the impersonal world and justice.

Keywords: basic assumptions, interpersonal tolerance, social tolerance, ethnic tolerance, tolerance as a personal characteristic, ethnic identity.

1. Introduction

The problem of interpersonal tolerance in modern socio-cultural context becomes more and more urgent. This situation is determined by the fact that in modern psychology interpersonal tolerance is understood as a necessary characteristic and a criterion of professionalism and maturity of the specialists of helping professions (social workers, psychologists, counselors, psychotherapists and others). For this reason an important task of modern professional education is to reveal those conditions, means and methods that make it possible to

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +7-903-782-115-64
E-mail address: gsk04@mail.ru
form and develop interpersonal tolerance projecting the final image (ideal model) which underlies the transformation of tolerance into the integral personality quality.

1.1 Background and Objective.

In our study we use the publications of foreign and Russian philosophers which reveal the fundamental aspects of the notion of “tolerance”, such as axiological, anthropological, epistemological, ontological and praxiological ones [1], [2], [3]; [4], [5]. We also base our work on the researches dedicated to different types of tolerance, its functions, phenomenology, formation and development [6], [7]. The ideas of Russian psychologists about the role of professionally important qualities in the work of specialists are also of great importance for the model creation [8], [9]. The important predisposition for making interpersonal tolerance model was the integration of several ideas of the following psychological fields: the psychology of relationships, cognitive psychology [10], [11], [12] and problems of social identity [13], [14], [15].

As the basis for our research we use the theory of Janoff-Bulman [16], [17] which gives the description of human conceptual system in terms of higher and lower order postulates. The latter includes narrow and specific generalizations, such as “I’m a good swimmer”. As for the former, it consists of abstract, global and generalized assumptions concerning the self, other people and the world [18]. Examples of such assumptions are “I’m a competent person” and “People generally care for others” [19]. These positive assumptions are developed from our earliest interactions with the world and are cognitively and affectively potent [20]. People provided with expectations about themselves, others and the world are able to function effectively and maintain the sense of invulnerability.

The main question of this study: are basic assumptions the predictors of the interpersonal tolerance and ethnic identity types?

2. Method

1.2 Participants

The participants were 120 psychology students, 97 females and 23 males, aged from 17 to 24 years old. The participants were third and forth year university students. It’s important to mention that traditionally at psychological faculties in Russian universities girls outnumber boys.

1.3 Instruments

The following questionnaires were used:

The World Assumptions Scale (WAS: [21] translated and adapted by O. Kravtsova [22]) has 32 items scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). This Scale includes eight subscales (Benevolence of the world, benevolence of people, justice, controllability, randomness, self-worth, self-control, and luck) which are combined into three integrative subscales: Benevolence of the World (Scale B), Meaningfulness of the World (Scale M) and Self Worth (Scale SW).

To diagnose the general level of tolerance express questionnaire “Tolerance index” was used. The principles underlying this field are developed in Russian and foreign studies [23]. Three subscales of this questionnaire are designed for the diagnostics of such aspects of tolerance as ethnic tolerance, social tolerance and tolerance as a personality characteristic.

This questionnaire “Types of ethnic identity” by Soldatova, Ryzhova [24] helps to diagnose ethnic consciousness and its transformation in situation of interethnic tension. The questionnaire includes the Scales: Ethno-nihilism (EN), Ethnic indifference (E In), Positive ethnic identity (PEI), Ethno-egoism (EE), Ethno-isolation (EI), Ethno-fanaticism (EF).

1.4 Procedure
The participants were third and fourth year students of psychology faculty. Testing was fulfilled in groups. Students who agreed to participate completed the questionnaires while doing their psychology course on methods of diagnosing communication.

3. Results
The main research question was explored using hierarchical regression models. In the first step of the analyses, the scores of 8 scales of WAS were evaluated as a predictor of scales of the Tolerance index and the Types of ethnic identity. In the second step, the three core assumptions were investigated as predictors of different types of the interpersonal tolerance. The results of the regression analysis of the Tolerance index and Types of ethnic identity were displayed in Table 3 where due to the article’s limited volume only significant factors are presented.

The analysis indicated that the benevolence of the impersonal world and luck were positive predictors of ethnic tolerance and tolerance index. Just as core assumption of meaningfulness of the world was a positive predictor of tolerance index. A principle of justice was a negative predictor of ethnic tolerance and tolerance index, but it was a positive predictor of ethno-fanaticism. Also, the principle of randomness and the core assumption of self-worth had negative influence on ethnic tolerance. There was no significant associations between WAS and social tolerance or tolerance as the personality characteristic in this study.

Table 1. Multiple regression analysis: world assumptions as predictors of tolerance index and types of ethnic identity

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The principle of justice and meaningfulness of the world were positive predictors of ethno-fanaticism and ethno-nihilism accordingly. There are negative predictors for some types of ethnic tolerance: benevolence of the impersonal world for ethno-egoism and ethno-fanaticism; a principle of justice for positive ethnic identity; self worth, luck and benevolence of the world for ethno-nihilism; self-controllability for ethno-isolationism. However, there was no statistically significant interaction effect between the rest world assumptions and types of ethnic tolerance.

4. Discussion
The aims of this study were, firstly, to investigate the world assumptions as predictors of different types of tolerance and ethnic identity.
The multiple regression analysis showed the influence of values on tolerance. From all values the most significant predictors were the benevolence of the impersonal world and the principle of justice. Each of these values influenced 4 of 10 investigated types of tolerance/intolerance. And justice reduces students’ ethnic tolerance and the general tolerance index that coincide with the results of researches proving the correlation of negative attitude to the ethnic majority with the level of conviction in justice of the world, whereas the relation to an ethnic group not occupying the position of ethnic minority, is connected with the level of conviction in favor of the world [25].

The most influential predictor among other assumptions turned to be the statement of luck, referring to perceptions of oneself as more or less lucky or unlucky. Thus, people who perceive the world as malevolent and unjust, yet feeling worthy, lucky and capable of eluding misfortune may still be capable of maintaining a sense of invulnerability. This belief influenced 2 types of tolerance, raising ethnic tolerance and reducing ethno-nihilism. As it is shown in above mentioned research [25], the level of conviction in one's own luck influences the negative attitude towards ethnic majority in ethnic minority. It is possible to assume, that students’ ideas of their luck are connected with the growth of their self-trust and positive attitude to people that makes them more indulgent and lowers their ethno-nihilism, on the one hand, while raising their ethnic tolerance, on the other.

Our research revealed the absence of correlation or influence of control over the outcomes of events on tolerance. It is a disturbing fact demanding further research and purposeful change.

One of the current studies examined the influence of a mass trauma (the Virginia Tech campus shootings) on anxiety symptoms and quality of life, as well as the potential vulnerability/protective roles of world assumptions and social support. Linear regression analyses revealed consistent predictive roles for world assumptions pertaining to control and self-worth as well as family support. In addition, for those more severely exposed to the shooting, greater belief in a lack of control over outcomes appeared to increase vulnerability for post-trauma physiological and emotional anxiety symptoms [26].

One of the outcomes of the ethnic consciousness transformation is growth of ethnic intolerance. Tolerance/intolerance is the main problem of ethnical relations under the growing tension between different nations. Strengthening of destructive tendencies in interethnic relations is determined by transformation of ethnic consciousness (hyper-identity) which coincides with three types of the identity: Ethno-egoism, Ethno-isolation, and Ethno-fanaticism. Ethno-egoism and Ethno-fanaticism are the stages of exaggerated ethnic identity leading to discriminatory interethnic interactions. In interethnic interactions hyper-identity is displayed in various forms of ethnic intolerance: from irritation as a reaction to the presence of other group members to the policy of their limited rights and abilities, aggressive and violent actions against other groups and even genocide [28]. Accordingly we can affirm that the world benevolence and the luck decrease the development of destructive forms of ethnic intolerance (Table 1, Figure 1).
The outcomes of regression analysis showed that assumptions do not influence the manifestation of social tolerance and tolerance as a personal characteristic within the given group of students. No influence on different types of tolerance was found of benevolence of people as entails that people are considered as basically kind, caring, and helpful and basic assumption is benevolence of the world. As it is proved in many researches, benevolence of people is the mediator between social skills and psychological health [27]. As for psychology students, their professional work is directly connected with people. It means the importance of the given factor for tolerance development. It is possible to assume, that absence of influence of this assumption on tolerance is connected with the fact that students are not involved into practical activities. At the same time, correlation indices illustrate the existence of influence tendencies which are supposed to get strengthened at the increase of the sample.

So, the results of regression analyses demonstrated that only three basic assumptions have more than one link with different kind of the tolerance and types of ethnic identity. Furthermore, these basic assumptions are more influence on decreasing the intolerance manifestations and destructive forms of ethnic identity than on the positive manifestations of interpersonal tolerance (Figure 1).

Thus, the regression model of tolerance can include the benevolence of the impersonal world, a principle of justice and the luck as the most significant predictors of tolerance within psychology students.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is necessary to mention that the basic assumptions of tolerance in psychology students at the given education level make positive impact on their integral indicator of tolerance (tolerance index) and ethnic tolerance. It is revealed, that conviction in justice of the world raises ethno-fanaticism as the type of students' intolerance.

It should be underlined, that assumptions have more considerable influence not on positive manifestations of interpersonal tolerance, but on the decrease of its intolerance manifestations. At the same time, psychology students reveal low integration degree of assumptions and interpersonal tolerance.

The given research contributes to the understanding of the influence of assumptions as a fundamental basis of tolerance on its manifestations in psychology students. The results may underlie practically-oriented programs providing integration of assumptions and interpersonal tolerance. We believe that such work will make
it possible to raise the quality of psychology-students education. Moreover it will provide the development of required professional competences.

References
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