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**Empathy as Personality Trait and Professional Quality of
Counselling Psychologists with Different Length of Professional
Experience**

PhD Dissertation Summary
for the purpose of obtaining
Philosophy Doctor in Psychology HSE

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Moscow 2018

Relevance of the study

The profession of counseling psychologist is nowadays acquiring more and more importance in Russia. However, personal psychological characteristics of an expert who has been trained in this profession, dynamics of development of counseling psychologist's essential skills and competencies during professional experience are still little studied. Empathy is one of the central features of a successful counseling psychologist as is recognized by the majority of experts. Thereby current study is focused on investigation and comparison of empathy degree among novice and experienced professionals. Personal characteristics and skills of a specialist don't remain static and unchangeable with an increase of working experience. Individual and professional investigation approaches to empathy are of particular scientific interest. In such a way it is possible to investigate two forms of empathy: one that is a personality trait and the other that is a professional quality, shown in professional contact with client.

The subject is relevant due to a high necessity of studying personal characteristics and professional skills of a counseling psychologist at different stages of professional life with a view to improving the subjective well-being, increasing the effectiveness of psychological assistance and preventing the burn-out which is affecting those who work in human service professions.

Research problem

Nondistinction of concept of empathy as a personality trait and as a professional characteristic of personality is widespread. This results in a common inconsistency of approaches to definition and investigation of empathy, in paradoxical results, difficulties in interpretation and predictive modeling of empirical data. Most of psychotherapists of different schools emphasize the importance of empathy for the psychotherapeutic process organized by the counseling psychologist, but hardly anybody give concrete expression to which empathy it is. Correlation between personal and individual and professional and role empathy demonstration of counselors is seldom considered and discussed.

An unreasonable transfer of the results of investigation of personal empathy at understanding and characterization of professional empathy expression is in evidence. Extrapolating of data obtained in tests of empathy as personality trait to make decisions on professional empathy is considered normal by default (V. Boyko's questionnaire use is an example).

Many Russian and foreign researches highlight that empathy degree arouses along with working time, thus appearing that empathy level is bigger within experienced psychotherapists than within young professionals, herewith it is not defined whether we're talking about personal and individual empathy or the professional one. Consequently it is very important to decide on legitimacy of such conclusion.

Thus we find important to make a distinction, to define and to study the two concerned empathy types of a counseling psychotherapist at various stages of practice.

Theoretical assumptions of B. Ananiev and V. Shadrikov are keys to analyze the two types of empathy. Their work highlights the importance of distinction of such human capacities as "personality", "actor/subject of activity", which in terms of S. Rubinstein are "united but not equivalent".

We also proceed from the understanding of "personality" that don't reduce the person term to a complex ("collection") of "characteristics", but describes it as incorporated in a set of activity-mediated social bonds and relations (A. Petrovsky), as a "significant other to significant others" (V. Petrovsky).

Research object: Empathy of counseling psychologists

Research subject: Expression of empathy as personal characteristic and professional skill within counseling psychologists with various practical experience.

Goals of the study: Investigate characteristics of empathy as personal quality and professional skill in counseling psychologists with different length of practical experience.

Research objectives:

1. To analyze scientific literature concerning empathy concept in order to demonstrate the importance of considering empathy as personal trait and professional quality of counseling psychologist.

2. To seek and select methodology for study empathy as empathy as personal trait and professional quality of counseling psychologist.

3. To ascertain and analyze the level of empathy as a personal trait among counseling psychologists with different length of practical experience.

4. To investigate and compare professional empathy level of counseling psychologists with different length of practical experience.

5. To identify correlations between practical experience and particularities of empathy acts among counseling psychologists.

Hypothesis

Empathy as personality trait is more intense within experienced psychologists than in beginning ones.

Empathy as professional trait comes at a higher level within experienced psychologists than within beginning ones.

The theoretical basis and methodological framework of this study are the fundamental principles of subject-assignment (B. Ananiev, A. Leontiev, S. Rubinstein, V. Merlin, V. Shadrikov), general personology (V. Petrovsky, E. Starovoitenko), person-centered and accepting therapy (C. Rogers, F. Vasiliuk, T. Kariagina, A. Orlov) approaches.

Research design.

We used questioning, psychological survey and expert assessment of counseling audio records in this study.

We used the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) and the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory for testing. We used the Therapist empathy scale (TES), description and assessment scale of Empathy Semiotic factors and Rogers and Truax Empathy scale for expert assessment.

We used methods of descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha estimate of internal consistency, comparison of means techniques (Mann-Whitney U-test)

and correlational analysis (Spearman correlation coefficient) in statistical and empirical data analysis.

Reliability and validity of the results are ensured by representative sampling and theoretical and practical relevance of methods used. A total of 63 respondents participated in this study: 32 counseling psychologists with 1-3 years of working experience and 31 counseling psychologists with a working experience of 7-15 years. We managed, recorded and postprocessed 63 experimental sessions as part of the study. All respondents were consulting in humanistic psychology approach.

We used IBM SPSS 23 software package for statistical analysis of results.

The scientific novelty of the study

Two forms of empathy were described within counseling psychologists: personal empathy and professional empathy. Multivariate analysis of empathy's demonstration of counseling psychologist as part of professional work was performed. Relationship between empathy's degree in personality and empathic manifestations in working activities was determined. Comparative analysis of empathy's degree within beginning and experienced counseling psychologists was made.

We applied professional empathy's studying techniques translated from English (Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI), designed for a tripartite assessment of empathy (from the consultant, client and observer's points of view) and the Therapist Empathy Scale, which allows to assess various aspects of therapist empathy to Russian-speaking population for the first time ever.

Theoretical relevance of research consists in distinction and correlation of two empathy's aspects – personality trait and professional quality of counseling psychologist. With regard to psychotherapeutic counseling we confirm the relevancy and necessity of the differentiation of such human being levels as “actor” and “personality” (in combination of its features and its outcome on other people), mentioned in literature.

Practical issues. Collected data on development and changing of consultant psychologists' empathy can be used to work out effective study programmes for the field. Research results can be applied to screen future professional counseling psychologists, to render professional support for experts during their practice with a goal of improving the effectiveness of professionals, and to counteract the emotional burnout.

Techniques translation made as part of research can be used to assess counseling psychologist performance in therapeutic interactions and for educational purposes. Those techniques can help in realizing assistance quality control and reviewing efficiency of counseling psychology training.

Theoretical and empirical parts results can be applied to academical program in general and counseling psychology sections. On basis of dissertation results, we elaborated a practical workshop in development of empathy as professional characteristic for counseling psychologist.

Key points.

1. We shall differentiate two constructs: empathy as personality trait and empathy as professional characteristic of personality when we describe empathy of counseling psychologist. As personality trait, empathy is a relatively immanent personal tendency to understand feelings of other by placing oneself in another's position which manifests in behaviour. Professional empathy is a deliberate mindset of psychologist displayed over process of counselling, that can be arranged by a professional in order to experience and understand feelings of the client by placing oneself in client's position without loosing a personal boundry, resulting in client feeling oneself heard and understood.

2. We found no significant difference in personal empathy degree within beginning and experienced counsellors, except an intention of getting into the inner world of fictional characters, which is strongly expressed, in novice professionals.

3. Professional empathy comes in a higher level within experienced then within beginning psychologists.

4. Novice counsellors show positive correlation between length of professional experience and degree of some characteristics of personal and professional empathy. Experienced counsellors show negative correlation between length of professional experience and degree of some characteristics of personal empathy and a positive correlation between length of employment and degree of some characteristics of professional empathy.

5. Psychologists with shorter work experience show negative correlation between age and professional empathy's rate (lifetime "works" against empathy); psychologists with longer work experience show a positive correlation of same characteristics (time "works" for empathy). We found no correlation between age and personal empathy's components in beginning and experienced psychologists.

6. All correlations found between personal and professional empathy are positive in novice specialists group and negative in experienced psychologists group.

Approbation.

We repeatedly discussed contents of this dissertation during postgraduate workshops on personality psychology and meetings of personality psychology department in National Research University the Higher School of Economics. Empirical results of this work were presented at the international conference "Psychosocial assistance in modern society: problems and solutions" (held in Saint-Petersburg State Institute of Psychology and Social Work, Saint-Petersburg, 2015), at the conference "Psychology of Individuality" (National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow 2016), at the international conference «Come Together: The power of group dynamics» (Sydney, 2015), at the international conference "Working at the Relational Edge of Evidence" (London, 2018). We used dissertation materials in lectures "Theory and practice of transactional analysis" (East European institute of Psychoanalysis, 2016-2018)

Work structure and volume.

Dissertation is composed of 3 chapters with introduction and conclusion, 275 sources of bibliography which includes 145 sources in English and 130 in Russian, and 6 appendixes. There are 4 illustrations and 14 tables. Dissertation consists of 165 pages.

General content.

Introduction contains rationale, description of problem, information on scientific novelty and theoretical relevance of study. It also contains list of aims, objectives, presents object, subject and research design, issues for defence, theoretical and methodological basics of study.

First chapter "Term "empathy" in psychology and psychotherapy" provides an overview of scientific concepts of empathy.

First section of the first chapter describes the development of the empathy concept, from its birth under German romantic philosophy with a name of "feeling into". Theodor Lipps is a creator of the most complete theory of "feeling into". He thought that inborn capacity of motor imitation that mediates our perception of others is basic to empathy. Term empathy itself came to psychology by virtue of Edward B. Titchener, who translated German term «Einfühlung» in English as empathy (in analogue with sympathy). Titchener determines empathy as a mechanism of imagination based on kinesthetic perception and which is a basis of every cognitive process. Thereafter the empathy term smoothly shifts to psychotherapeutic conversions and is found in Freud's works as a way of perception of other's mind in everyday life, which is also a basis to understanding humor. Term "empathy" is also found in works of Ferenczi who describes it as an essential factor in building a relationship between psychotherapist and patient.

The second section of the first chapter describes a period of an active development of understanding empathy in psychotherapy. According to Carl Rogers, empathy process suggests an insight in others personal world of perception. Empathy goes beyond psychotherapeutic office and is a condition for development in all caring professions, thus empathy becomes an important human need. According to Heinz Kohut, empathy is an instrument of

psychotherapist work; it is both a need of personal growth and an empirical method of psychology and psychoanalysis. After Kohut, empathy is a process of seeing and feeling of self in a context of other's life, a moderate way of perception of what other feels.

The third section of the first chapter describes the diversity of approaches to determine empathy in psychology. The whole variety of ways of defining empathy which exist in philosophic, psychological resources can be divided in three general types: "epistemological", "ethical" and "integrative". Integrative approach combines epistemological and affective nuances with a behavioral component of empathy.

In the fourth section of the first chapter we describe basic approaches to empathy research in psychological theory and practice. We distinguish two leading approaches to empathy in psychology: empathy considered as personality characteristic and empathy considered as a characteristic of interpersonal interactions. Generally, researchers use tests for investigation of empathy as personality characteristic. There are three strategies of studying empathic interactions between client and therapist: psychotherapists evaluate themselves, clients evaluate their therapist and external experts evaluate empathy of counselling psychotherapist using session records. We describe results of significant investigations of empathy as professional trait (which is important for caring professions), as altruistic behavior factor, as component of emotional intelligence and as a result of mirror neuron's work.

In the fifth section of the first chapter, we discuss the importance of empathy for professional activity of a counselling psychologist. The majority of researchers and practicing psychotherapist come to a consensus on the importance and effectiveness of empathy in therapeutic process. Some of psychotherapy schools define empathy as a professional skill and focus extensively on mastering empathy throughout all learning stages.

In the sixth section of the first chapter "Stages of professional development of a counselling psychologist ", we provide evidence of

importance of personal and professional empathy research on various stages of professional development.

We describe several stages of professional development of a counselling psychologist and conflicts, which a specialist comes up against in professional development.

The seventh section of the first chapter we describe the results of previous study of empathy, self-actualization and professional self-evaluation of 103 counselling psychologists with various working experience. This study influenced the statement of hypotheses, aims and objectives of present dissertation. In this chapter, we also extend research problem of empathy as personal trait and a professional quality of a counselling psychologist, which we stated in introduction.

Test of empathy capabilities (V. Boyko questionnaire) shows that empathy is higher within beginning psychotherapist then within more experienced ones (with 3-6 and 7-15 years of working practice respectively). This fact disproves one of the hypotheses of present study and a popular belief that empathy is higher in experienced counselling psychologist than in beginning ones. Basing on this investigation, we assumed that term empathy has a slightly other meaning to psychologists than to other professionals. Thus, empathy is less important to counselling psychologists as personality trait than as professional skill. During psychotherapy sessions, empathy manifests as an ability of reflecting client feelings and of building a specific therapeutic relationship with client.

We suppose that counseling psychologists (who use empathy as professional skill) can reduce empathy level in everyday life with increase of working experience, which helps them to save personal energy and avoid emotional burnout. When we distinguish personal and professional empathy in the performance of a counselling psychologist, we have regard to the nature of counseling work, which unite manifestation of agency and personality.

Talking of agency of counseling psychologist in their work, we highlight that a counseling psychologist sets himself and achieves a purpose of helping

the client in solving difficult situations, mastering self-regulation, setting development goals etc. Here we are facing a counselor as a professional who has relevant aptitudes and competences displayed in communication with client.

When we talk of personality, we mean that counselor comes to be in the life of the client ("an ideal representation and continuity", "significance for a significant other" in terms of V. Petrovsky). From this perspective, we rely on the fundamental distinction of "actor" and "personality" (B. Ananiev, V. Shadrikov). From this point of view, psychological counseling is activity as communication just as communication activity.

The second chapter "Study management and methods of personal and professional empathy investigation in counseling psychologists with different length of professional experience" consists of four sections and describes logics of composition, phases and investigative techniques of the dissertation study.

From first to fourth sections of the second chapter, we describe experimental study steps, particularities of the investigation procedure with subjects, who lead psychotherapeutic sessions in inter-visor groups of three people and the criteria of choosing the experts who made sessions assessment. We describe in detail the sampling process and explain rationale for division of 63 subjects in two groups: experienced and beginning counseling psychologists. We characterize methods of studying empathy as personal trait and professional quality and describe statistical methods of data processing.

In third chapter, we present experimental results of study of empathy in counseling psychologists with various working experience. This chapter consists of three sections in which we describe experimental results of study.

First section of the third chapter describes results of a comparative study of the group 1 and group 2, measured by Interpersonal reactivity index (IRI), which targets personal empathy.

Table 1. Results of comparative study of IRI test measures in group 1 and 2.

IRI items	Mean		Standart deviation		Mann-Whitney U-test	P value
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2		
Fantasy	22,28	19,52	3,05	4,14	305,00**	,008
Perspective Taking	19,28	19,35	3,96	3,66	490,00	,934
Empathic Concern	17,52	19,35	3,76	2,86	376,50	,099
Personal Distress	13,28	11,55	5,30	3,70	417,28	,276

Statistical processing of data reveals significant difference on the scale “Fantasy” between group 1 and 2. Beginning counselors (with working experience from one to three years) have greater ratios on Fantasy scale in comparison with experienced psychologists. Beginning psychotherapists tend to imaginary transfer themselves to emotions and acts of fantasy characters from books, movies and plays.

In the second section of the third chapter, we describe reliability-testing results of Barret-Lennard test using Cronbrach’s alpha estimate. Two of the four scales match reliability criteria. We made the comparative study of rates of counselors, clients and observers from first and second group on scales “Empathy” and “Respect” using Mann-Whitney U-test.

Table 2. Results of comparative analysis of counselors, clients and observers from group 1 and group 2.

BLRI items	Mean		Standart deviation		Mann-Whitney U-test	P value
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2		
Results of comparative analysis of counsellor's raitings from their own point of view						
«Empathy»	49,63	54,55	7,22	6,99	309,50*	,010
«Respect»	22,13	22,45	2,41	3,51	391,00	,117
Results of comparative analysis of counsellor's raitings from the clients point of view						
«Empathy»	49,22	61,0	13,20	7,31	209,50**	,000
«Respect»	21,19	22,13	2,78	2,03	403,00	,190
Results of comparative analysis of counsellor's raitings from the observers point of view						
«Empathy»	47,78	59,32	11,44	10,43	195,50**	,000
«Respect»	21,63	22,13	2,34	3,05	396,00	,150

We revealed statistically significant difference on scale of empathy between group 1 and 2.

Experienced counselling psychologists estimate the quality of their contribution to relationship building process with client at a higher level than novice counsellors.

Client's rates from group 1 (by comparison with group 2) show significant difference on empathy scale. Clients of experienced psychologists estimate the counsellor's empathy level during sessions at a higher level than clients of novices.

Experienced therapists received higher marks on empathy scale from observers who supervised the therapeutic process than those with less working experience.

Second section of third chapter describes procedure of preparation of experts to assign experimental sessions; we checked the results of expert assessment consensus with three evaluation techniques using Cronbach's alpha estimate. As we found the experts' assessment was consistent, we made a comparison of averaged results of the expert assessment measures of three experts in two groups by triple methods.

Table 3 represents averaged rating of three experts on every question of Therapist Empathy Scale (TES) and results of comparison between group 1 and 2 (Mann-Whitney U-test).

Table 3. Comparative analysis of results on averaged expert assessment of various empathy markers in group 1 and 2.

TES items	Mean in group 1	Mean in group 2	Mann-Whitney U-test	P value
1. Concern	3,70	6,40	5,50	,000
2. Expressiveness	2,44	5,14	20,00	,000
3. Resonate or capture client feelings	2,75	5,83	4,00	,000
4. Warmth	3,27	5,83	12,50	,000
5. Attuned to client's inner world	3,06	6,14	4,00	,000
6. Understanding cognitive	2,83	5,85	1,50	,000

framework				
7. Understanding feelings/inner experience	2,56	5,66	5,50	,000
8. Acceptance of feelings/inner experiences	2,99	5,89	1,00	,000
9. Responsiveness	2,53	5,67	,50	,000

By unanimous opinion of experts, experienced therapists give better care; they are more authentically involved in therapeutic process and stay focused on client's needs. Counseling psychologists learn to be empathic, to invest energy and to use delicate voice nuances in order to encourage and reflect client's manifestations. All those capabilities come with experience. Beginning counsellor can use its role as shelter; just starting to investigate one's own boundaries. This can make an impression of coldness and artificialness on experts, thus it does not work on benefit of therapeutic alliance and confidence.

Experienced counselors aim client's inner world more efficiently and precisely, they sometimes notice things that escape from consciousness of the client. Beginning counselors are often deforming and replacing client's phenomenology by their own ideas and feelings that are sometimes way off the original material, feelings and emotional experience presented by client.

Experienced counselors display the importance of thoughts and intentions of client and are usually ready to perceive them with no prejudice or judgments; while a novice tends to start talking of its own experience and fantasizes of true and false strategies and of what could be done in client's position.

Experienced counseling psychologists provide many opportunities for exploration of cognitive and emotional spheres to the client; they accurately mirror things happening with client, give names to the emotional experience. Beginning therapists frequently fail to mirror and show themselves nonresponsive to client's corrections.

Novices can be short with clients; they do not realize the sensibility of the client. While experienced psychotherapists show unconditional respect towards client's feelings. They are sensitive and adjust reactions following client instead

of trying to control the dialogue in accordance to personal plans and ideas on possible therapeutic strategies that novices lean on because of a lack of self-confidence and experience.

Table 4 represents averaged assessment of the three experts on Semiotic aspects of every component of empathy and results of comparison of those assessments between group 1 and group 2 (made with Mann-Whitney test).

Table 4: Comparative analysis of results: expert assessment of various components in group 1 and group 2.

Semiotic aspect of empathy	Mean in group 1	Mean in group 2	Mann-Whitney U-test	P value
Indicative aspect	1,27	3,37	6,00	,000
Nominative aspect	0,78	2,83	13,50	,000
Significative aspect	1,42	3,66	4,00	,000
Expressive aspect	0,55	2,35	47,50	,000

Empathy is more revealed in experienced counselors practice in its indicative aspect – professionals are able to help client concentrate on most important things fast and precisely. Counselor follows the client and is able to shift attention from external to the inner side of the problem and helps focusing on inner feelings triggered by the environment. Beginning counselors are very likely to remain in discussion of external sides of the problem with no connection to client's emotional experience.

It is also typically occurring that beginning counselors interrupt the narrative and start to inquire client's feelings towards present case, which can intensely frustrate, degrade confidence and block self-revelation of client.

Nominative aspect of empathy helps professionals to name the particular emotional experience, to relegate it to a certain kind of phenomena, thus making a figure of perception of client and therapeutic work. Beginners often do not actualize nominative aspect of empathy in their work or they do it in a wrong way. That happens when a specialist responds to experience of client with too much comparison with one's own and replace client feelings by one's own ones.

Significative aspect of empathy occurs when a specialist helps client to attach significance to the emotional experience. In that case, the work with meanings and experience can be fully enclosed in client's cognitive sphere. Novices often do not proceed with this phase or tend to replace client's understanding by one's own.

Expressive aspect is realized in professional work through use of expressive means of language. Counselor can express various intense of empathy to the client using rich metaphors. With this component, the relationship between client and therapist becomes truly intimate, the confidence and working alliance significantly increase, client feels shared creativeness in process. Beginnings rarely use expressive means of language while working with clients.

Experienced psychotherapists predominantly show all four empathy aspects in their work. Altogether, those aspects assure integral working through emotional experience of the client. Those four aspects are hardly ever revealed altogether in beginner's work.

Table 5 shows average ratings of three experts (using Rogers-Truax empathy scale) and results of comparison between group 1 and group 2 (using Mann-Whitney test).

Table 5. Average experts rating of general empathy level in group 1 and group 2, results of comparative analysis.

Rogers-Truax empathy scale	Mean in group 1	Mean in group 2	Mann-Whitney U-test	P value
General empathy level in a therapeutic session	2,00	3,62	13,00	,000

Beginning psychotherapists mostly react on client's feelings and emotions affectively, not at the level of rationality and meaning. Novices tend to communicate their own ideas on what happens to client, which can be very much different from client's experience.

Experienced counselors are sensitive and accurate in reactions to client's emotions as well as to their deeper feelings, lying below the surface; counselor

perceives tenderly and introduce gently those feelings that client cannot yet reveal. Such specialist gets in tune with client; he can stay present in case of a deep self-revelation.

In third section of the third chapter, we describe results of correlational analysis of all studied factors in all test groups, made with Spearman correlation analysis.

We searched for correlations through 30 factors, including working experience, age and various measures of professional and personal empathy, in every group.

In the group of novice counselors (group 1) we found several correlations between length of working experience and personal and professional empathy levels: length of professional practice correlates with «Perspective Taking» (IRI) ($r = ,447^*$; $p = ,010$), «Understanding feelings/inner experience» (TES) ($r = ,379^*$; $p = ,032$), «Nominative aspect of empathy» (SAE) ($r = ,364^*$; $p = ,041$). Some negative correlations were found between age of subjects and several professional empathy indicators: «Concern» (TES) ($r = , -425^*$; $p = ,015$), «Warmth» (TES) ($r = -,454^{**}$; $p = ,009$), «Responsiveness» (TES) ($r = , -409^*$; $p = ,020$). Thus, age "operates against" professional empathy within beginning counselors.

While researching correlations between personal and professional empathy in novice counselors we have found correlations between «Fantasy» (IRI) and «Concern» (TES) ($r = ,351^*$; $p = ,049$), between «Empathic Concern» (IRI) and several items of counselors own assessment of his empathic interaction with client: «Empathy» from counselor's perspective (BLRI) ($r = ,378^*$; $p = ,033$), «Respect» from counselor's perspective ($r = ,462^{**}$; $p = ,033$). Therefore, the higher is the level of personal empathy of a psychotherapist, the higher the counselor is assessing his own empathic interaction with client. It seems that beginning counselors project their personal empathic manifestations on to the professional empathy.

We found negative correlations between working experience and personal empathy level and positive correlations between working experience and

professional empathy level in experienced counselors (group 2). Length of professional practice correlates with «Perspective taking» (IRI) ($r = -,531^{**}$; $p = ,002$) and «Understanding feelings/inner experience» (TES) ($r = ,443^*$; $p = ,013$). Thus, working experience don't contribute to manifestations of empathy in personal life of experienced psychotherapists; the longer the working experience is, the less they tend to put themselves at the other's place and to provide empathic care. At the same time, working experience is beneficial to professional understanding of other's feelings.

We found positive correlations between age of subjects and a number of professional empathy characteristics in experienced group: age of experiences professionals correlates with «Understanding feelings/inner experience» (TES) ($r = ,459^{**}$; $p = ,009$) and «Nominative aspect of empathy» (SAE) ($r = ,401^*$; $p = ,025$). Thus, age "works for" professional empathy within experienced counselors.

We found no correlation between age and personal empathy level in group 1, just as in group 2.

The group of experienced counsellors shows negative correlation between personal and professional empathy. «Fantasy» (IRI) correlates with «Respect» from observer's perspective (BLRI) ($r = -,472^{**}$; $p = ,007$), «Attuned to client's inner world» (TES) ($r = -,406^*$; $p = ,024$), «General empathy level in a therapeutic session» according to Rogers-Truax empathy scale ($r = -,358^*$; $p = ,048$).

Therefore, "a tendency to imaginary transfer oneself to emotions and acts of fiction characters from books, movies and plays" is negatively correlated to a professional empathy; in particular the more empathic therapist is the less he is predisposed to connect with emotional world of artificial characters.

Real life of real people is above and beyond to psychotherapists with great working experience to empathize with.

High levels of professional empathy can be assign to the lack of energy in private life of therapists, which is not enough to extent sympathy and empathize others; empathy then comes through relationship with clients.

Conclusions:

1. We underpinned an importance of considering empathy as personal trait and professional quality of a counseling psychotherapist, as empathy gets an activity character in this profession.
2. Through the analysis of literature, we formed an opinion on two types of empathy; basing on this opinion, we found techniques satisfying aims of study. We used the most sustainable methods for the assessment by reference to modern researches of empathy.
3. Comparative analysis of the severity of empathy as a personality trait of counseling psychologists with different length of professional experience showed no significant differences, except for a much more pronounced intention of beginning counseling psychologists to get into the inner world of characters of art works.
4. Comparative study of professional empathy of counseling psychologists with various working experience demonstrated significant difference in all aspects of empathy between group 1 and 2. Thus, empathy as professional characteristic is expressed on a far more high level in experienced psychologists (according to counselors themselves, clients, observers and experts).
5. Correlations between the length of professional experience, age and features of manifestation of empathy of counseling psychologists were revealed:
 - Positive correlations between the the length of professional experience and indicators of empathy as a personality trait and empathy as a professional quality were revealed in the group of beginning specialists; the experience of experienced specialists is positively correlated with empathy as a professional quality and is negatively associated with empathy as a personal trait
 - Age of novice counselors is negatively correlated with empathy as a professional quality and does not correlate with empathy as a personality trait; the age of experienced professionals is positively correlated with

empathy as a professional quality, correlations with empathy as a personality trait are not revealed

- Some indicators of empathy as a personality trait in the group of novice practitioners are positively correlated with their own assessment of empathy as a professional quality; in experienced professionals, empathy as a personality trait is correlated with empathy as a professional quality negatively.

Substantive features of this dissertation are reflected in the following publications:

1. Sizikova M. Paradoxical Findings Regarding Therapist Empathy Based on Length of Professional Experience / M. Sizikova, V. Goussakovski // *Transactional Analysis Journal*. – 2017. – Vol. 47. – №. 2. – P. 112-125.
2. Sizikova M. Empathy as a Fundamental Dimension of a Counselling Psychologist's work / M. Sizikova // *Society: Sociology, Psychology, Pedagogics*. – 2016. – №. 9. – P. 28-31.
3. Sizikova M. Peculiarities of On-the-job Self-actualization of Counselling Psychologist's // *Acmeology*. – 2016. – №. 4. – P. 47-52.
4. Sizikova M. Empathy as a personal quality of Counselling Psychologist's with Different Length of Professional Experience // *National Health*. – 2018. – №. 1. – URL: <http://www.national-zdorov.ru/userfiles/file/yyxlxpxjmtaen7wvugsmys2tu9ryuz5l.pdf>