Dynamics of Successful Formation of Professional Identity of Future Psychologists in Higher Education Institutions

Olha ZAVERUKHA[1],
Ihor POPOVYCH[2],
Yevhen KARPENKO[3],
Olena KOZMENKO[4],
Oksana STELMAKH[5],
Oksana BORYSENKO[6],
Inesa HULIAS[7],
Zoriana KOVALCHUK[8]

[1] Candidate of psychological sciences, Lecturer of the Department of Practical Psychology and Pedagogy, Lviv State University of Life Safety, Lviv, Ukraine, olichka.zaverukha@gmail.com

[2] Doctor of Psychological Sciences, Full Professor, Full Professor of the Department of Psychology, Kherson State University, Kherson, Ukraine, ihorpopovych999@gmail.com

[3] Doctor of Psychological Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Psychology, Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, Lviv, Ukraine, psiholog_pp@ukr.net

[4] Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Dean of Faculty of International Relations, Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University, Severodonetsk, Ukraine, kozmenko@snu.edu.ua

[5] Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Senior lecturer at the Department of Practical Psychology and Pedagogy, Lviv State University of Life Safety, Lviv, Ukraine, stelmahoksana14@gmail.com

Abstract: The article is devoted to the theoretical substantiation and empirical research of dynamic features of successful professional identity's formation of students-psychologists in institutions of higher education. The importance of this issue is substantiated and an empirical research is held. The psychological semantic features of the formation's stages of professionalism, professional crises during the profession of psychologist at the university are studied. The influence of educational and professional activity on professional identity is outlined. The definition of professional identity as a psychological category is concretized, which is the awareness of a specialist of his belonging to a certain profession and a certain professional community. Valid psychodiagnostic tools were used and comparative and correlation analyses of data were performed. The structure of professional identity, which combines cognitive, emotional and behavioural components, is revealed. The results of empirical research confirmed that the dynamics of successful development of professional identity of future psychologists in the learning process is the gradual formation of its structural components. Crisis tendencies in the identity of third-year students have been established. They are caused by frustration in professional and life choices, inconsistency of expectations and ideas about the profession and the realities of its acquisition. The presence of identity crisis of the third-year students was established. It is proved that professional identity is determined by the conscious choice of respondents by profession. It is verified and substantiated that students, who are characterized by the formed mature professional identity, quite consciously choose the educational trajectory and carefully complete it with selective educational components.

Keywords: *Identity crisis; student-psychologist; profession; educational components; educational trajectory.*

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[6] Candidate of psychological sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Management Psychology, Lviv State University of Internal Affairs, Lviv, Ukraine, oksborysenko@gmail.com

[7] Doctor of Psychological Sciences, Associate Professor, Full Professor of the Department of Psychology, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Chernivtsi, Ukraine, inehulias@ukr.net

[8] Doctor of psychological sciences, Full Professor, Department Psychology, Lviv State University Internal Affairs, Lviv, Ukraine, zoriana01051974@i.ua

1. Introduction

The political, economic and social spheres of our time demonstrate extremely rapid changes that require flexibility and the ability to make quick decisions and influence interpersonal relationships from the modern individual. A person oversaturated with information and events cannot remain indifferent to the global changes in the space in which he/she exists. Reorientation of values and attitudes consciously and subconsciously neurotises the personality. On the one hand, a person tries to protect his own integrity from the influence of foreign economic transformations, on the other – not to lose his own "Self" and take his place and play a role in a constantly changing environment. In such cognitive dissonance, by demonstrating one's own subjectivity, the individual is able to reach a slightly higher level.

No less important for the individual is his professional field, in which the interest of scientists is constantly growing. As never before, the most important and characteristic feature of change is the requirement of competitiveness of a specialist in a fleeting world. However, not all individuals are adequately able to estimate the crisis and adapt accordingly, to change to new requirements and conditions. This is largely due to the quality of training. There are countries that have high socio-economic development, a formed culture of psychological services, at the same time no less need to solve the issues of effective adaptation and identification of specialists in the psychological sphere. The development of a career, experience and professional identity of US psychologists in the field of healthcare is analyzed. A number of problems encountered by psychologists are outlined. These problems relate to adaptation, training, behavioral aspects of interference with health, ethical aspects and legality of their movement in a medical hierarchy (Mrdjenovich et al., 2004; Raque-Bogdan et al., 2020). Such rhetoric gives grounds to argue that this problem is relevant in the global dimension and needs to be solved. A high level of development of professionally important qualities is impossible without a successful process of professional identification. Active adaptation of psychology in various spheres of human life, the growing demand for the services of a psychologist and his place in society encourage researchers to pay more attention to becoming a specialist-psychologist at the stage of educational and professional training – assimilation of knowledge, skills and abilities.

2. Literature review

At the present stage of development of psychological science, there are researches relating to the study of the professional identity's problem, the determinants of its formation, including the stage of higher education (James, 2007). Some features of the development of confidentiality are described and successfully revealed through the prism of periodization of professional development and socialization in higher education institutions (Erikson, 1996; Jenkins, 1996). The professional socialization of the students themselves is also considered, the professional self-identity and self-consciousness of the subjects of different professions are described (Erikson, 1996). The principles of active social and psychological training are determined (Blynova et al., 2020e; Kovalchuk, 2019). In the context of professional identity research, presents scientific interest in the study of national identity (Fedorenko et al., 2020). All these studies prove the completeness of the problem of patterns, stages of confidentiality's formation, professional crises during university studies and the impact of educational and professional activities on its formation. However, it seems to us that the dynamics of the professional identity's formation of future specialists of certain specialties, in particular, psychologists, is not fully empirically revealed. The issue of structural components' formation of professional identity and its crisis periods is poorly studied.

The leading activity of an adult is work. That is why the general psychological well-being of a person is determined by the degree of self-realization in the profession (Halian et al., 2020a; 2021). Professions are an expression not only of their inherent properties, i. e. responsibilities, skills and abilities, but also of such characteristics as prestige, level of education, material income, social significance of labour, power, etc., i. e. in the main characteristics that determine the parameters of social stratification and social mobility (Blynova et al., 2020b; Halian et al., 2020c). When a person changes the content of work, professional environment, inevitably there are changes in the prestige of work, its social significance, in the education required to perform, material security, that is, a person almost completely changes the social stratum. Note that in this regard, there are other requirements for the set of knowledge, skills and abilities that are necessary to perform a particular type of work. This, in turn, leads to the transformation of the image of professional "Self", i. e. to a change in professional identity.

The profession defines the semantic positions of professional identity, determines the general structure of the complete integrity of professional identity and the whole community of a particular profession.

Professional identity is a psychological category that refers to the awareness of one's belonging to a certain profession as a branch of activity and a certain professional community. Professional identity, like other types of identity, contains cognitive, emotional and behavioural components.

At the behavioural level, identity is the result of solving vital problems, and every life choice is based on personal values and meanings and contributes to the process of acquiring and changing identity.

We can talk about the acquired professional identity, if a person who has received appropriate basic education has certain professional knowledge and skills, clearly realizes that he is a specialist in this field (cognitive component of confidentiality), has a positive attitude to it, forms a system of professional and moral evaluations (emotional and evaluative component of confidentiality). In professional activity the features (behavioural component of confidentiality) corresponding to the specialist are traced (Afanasenko, 2017). Based on the typology of identity (Marcia, 1980; Shneider, 2001), we can assume the following options: mature professional identity, diffuse "blurred" professional identity with unformed professional goals and perspective, premature identity, when it is built on the prestige of the profession, and internal personal resources are unused.

Professional identity is a multidimensional and integrative psychological phenomenon that provides a person with integrity, identity and certainty, develops in the process of professional training. L. Shneider (2001) pays a special attention to his own activity of the individual, i. e. the processes of self-determination, self-organization and personalization. The process of professional self-determination involves the acquisition of personal meanings of work, i. e. integrity. The process of professional personalization is related to the process of joining the professional community, i. e. identity. The process of self-organization refers to the process of structuring time, ordering, independence in the organization of life, i. e. certainty.

We come to the generalization that the main feature of a mature personality and responsible behaviour is a person's ability to be guided in their behaviour by their own awareness, formed goals. This is a phenomenon of identity, i. e. an individual's perception of his social value, uniqueness and meaning of his life (Kalenchuk, 2019; Ma et al., 2020; Popovych et al., 2021b). Of particular importance is the time dimension –

the formation of ideas about the future, past and present (Khmiliar et al., 2020; Popovych et al., 2021a; Popovych, 2008).

We assume that the empirical research of the dynamics of successful professional identity of future psychologists will allow to draw significant conclusions that will be operationalized in the training of not only applicants for psychological specialties, but in general specialists of socionomic profile in higher education institutions.

The aim of the article is a theoretical substantiation and empirical research of the dynamics of successful professional identity's formation of students-psychologists in higher education institutions.

3. Research of Methodology

The methodological basis of the empirical research were the following theoretical provisions:

1) professional identity is considered as the unity of functional "Self", i. e. through activities and actions and existential "Self", i. e. through the meanings and values of this activity;

2) a person is integrated into the professional and social community, i. e. in the process of acquiring identity the influence of professional space is significant;

3) in the process of professional self-determination, a person forms an idea of himself as a specialist, a representative of the professional community, i. e. an adequate image of "Self" is formed.

The methodological basis of the empirical research of the dynamics of the successful professional identity's formation of future psychologists was the algorithm of empirical actions. It is a sequence of a proven methods' number and techniques of empirical research, which uses relevant psychodiagnostic tools. The methodology proposed by the author's team is tested in the process of research of adaptation processes (Blynova et al., 2020a; Hudimova et al., 2021; Kononenko et al., 2020), semantic parameters of psychological phenomena (Halian et al., 2020b; Plokhikh et al., 2021), innovative pedagogical activity (Blynova et al., 2020c; Fizeshi, 2020; Kyrian et al., 2020; Palamarchuk et al., 2020; Tsiuniak et al., 2020), different types of activity and research of mental states of respondents at different age stages (Blynova et al., 2020d; Popovych et al., 2020; Shevchenko et al., 2020). Our proposed research is partly or generally related to the empirical research of the dynamics of the successful professional identity of future psychologists.

Participants

The empirical research was hold on the basis of the Department of Practical Psychology and Pedagogy of Lviv State University of Life Safety, the Department of Pedagogy of Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University and the Department of Psychology of Lviv State University of Internal Affairs. The research involved 103 graduates of specialty 053 "Psychology" of the first and third years of study. 50 students of the first year of study. In the third year of study – 53 students. The age range of respondents was 17-25 years. The average arithmetic value of the ages of the sample set was 19.2 years (SD = 2.92). The number of 50 students of the first year and 53 students of the third year are statistically relevant. Such a design of a sample population allows you to establish dynamic indicators that will have a high level of reliability and will have a low error.

The research is held according to the ethical standards of the committee on the rights of experiments of the Helsinki declaration (World Medical Association, 2013). The permission to conduct the research of the administrations of the faculties was received, which are the basis of research and actually preparing psychologists. Also received approval on the study of the dynamics of successful formation of professional identity of future psychologists Institutional Review Board (IRB). Respondents in advance were informed about the conditions of participation in the study and confidentiality of data collection. All students voluntarily took part in an empirical research. We state that early awareness, voluntary participation and confidentiality of data collection ensured the implementation of ethical principles and the reliability of empirical data received.

Instruments

To determine the cognitive component of confidentiality, in particular, professional affiliation, and the dynamics of its development during training in higher education on different courses, we used the modified self-describing test "Who am I?" by M. Kuhn – T. McPerlenda, adapted by N. Ivanova (2012). The definition of organizational identity for respondents was carried out by identifying the presence in the list of "self-determination" categories. A frequency has an importance in which they are observed. Range on a ten-point scale applied.

To research the formation's level of the profession's image, which is a cognitive component of professional identity, we used the method of "Personal professional plans" E. Klimov (1996). The technique has forty-eight statements. The method has seven scales that provide the installation

of professional identity components: cognitive-reflexive (CR); motivational-value (MV); Pro-behavioral (PB); activity-practical (AP); emotional-volitional (EV); personal professional activity (PPA); an alternative professional identity (API). The reliability parameter of Cronbach-α is set, which in this version: α = .743. The method is aimed at studying professional goals, ideas about ways and opportunities to achieve them, understanding the requirements of the future profession.

In the process of studying the emotional and evaluative component of professional identity, we used separate scales of the questionnaire "Self-assessment" (Stolin, 1983). The questionnaire has one hundred questions. Scales of the questionnaire: frankness, self-confidence, self-trusting, mirror "Self", self-value, self-acceptance, self-adjustment, conflict, self-accusation. The questionnaire "Sels-development" is used for the purpose of qualitative outline of psychological content parameters of the test phenomenon. The reliability parameter of the Cronbach-α is set, which in this version: α = .713.

L. Shneider's "Method of Determining Professional Identity" (Shneider, 2001) established the prevailing types of respondents' professional identity. "Methodology for determining professional identity" establishes a prevalent type of respondent identity: diffuse identity, moratorium or identity crisis, premature identity achieved (mature) identity, pseudo-identity. The reliability parameter of the Cronbach-α is installed, which in this version was: α = .734. The received Cronbach-α data are within satisfactory (.7) and high levels (.9). The psychodiagnostic tools used in the research, with a significant list of scales allowed relevantly reflected and qualitatively examine the subject of research. The listed arguments have provided reliable data.

Statistical Analysis

Computer programs are used for mathematical processing of the received data: *"SPSS" v. 23.0 and "MS Office Excel 2010"*. Arithmetic mean value of parameters *(M)* and mean-square deviation *(SD)* were defined. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test was used to check the significance of the differences in the mean values of each component of the "Self" image. Fisher's angular transformation criterion was used. Differences between values of parameters at level p≤.05 and p≤.01 considered statistically significant.

4. Results and Discussion

The pertinence of belonging to a particular profession was determined by us in two ways. First, as the significance of this category for respondents. The principle of "intra-individual" comparison of categories is used – professional affiliation is analysed in terms of its presence-absence of the respondents' frequency with which it is observed, the place in the link of other categories. Second, we consider it important to analyse "intergroup" interpretations. A comparative analysis of this category in different groups of students was studied by us. To receive an indicator of the average rank of "professional affiliation" in the list of other categories of self-determination, we used the "inverse" (mirror) scale. That is, the closer the category denoting "professional affiliation" to the beginning of the series, the higher the rank. For example, if the respondent indicated in the first place – "psychologist" or "future psychologist" or "student-psychologist", then such an answer received 10 points, if in second place – 9 points.

In analyzing the relationship between the objective, emotional and professional components of the image "Self" of student-psychologist's, the following trends were recorded. In their characteristics, first- and third-year students more often use the concepts that make up the content of the emotional component (51.46%; n=53 and 45.63%; n=47, respectively). Objective concepts are less common (20.38%; n=21 of the first-year students, 25.24%; n=26 of the third-year students). Concepts that reflect the content of the professional component are even rarer. The ratio by years of study is 6.18% and 13.39%, respectively. At the same time, the placement of professional self-characteristics in 63.10% of descriptions among the first six answers indicates that studying at the university allowed students of psychology to form in themselves, although not yet sufficiently pronounced, but the image of "Self in the profession".

When calculating the levels of the mean values and standard components' deviations of the image "Self" of the respondents, it was found that the degree of variability of individual values is greater than the objective and professional components. At the same time, when checking the significance of differences in the mean values of each component of the image "Self" for respondents of both two courses, using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney *U*-test, statistical significance was proved only by professional component (* – p <.01). Descriptive characteristics of the image's components of "Self" for students-psychologists under the courses of study are given (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Descriptive characteristics of the image's components of "Self" for students-psychologists under courses*

| Course of study | Components of the image "Self" | | | | | |
| | Objective | | Emotional | | Professional | |
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
First course	4.36	1.57	9.8	2.24	1.05*	.88
Third course	4.75	1.61	9.4	1.43	2.23*	.69

Note: M – arithmetic mean; SD – mean square deviation; * – p<.01.

There is an increase in the cognitive complexity of "Self" image. However, the percentage of students who have the required level of professional self-awareness is quite small. It was found that only 18.45% (n=19) of first-year students, 29.13% (n=30) of third-year students have a sufficient level of Self-image formation, which is reflected in cognitive saturation and the presence of a sufficient number of objectives, emotional, professional and positively colored constructs. Respectively, 82.52% (n=85) and 70.87% (n=73) of first- and third-year students showed an insufficient level of formation of the image "Self".

According to the method of "Personal professional plans" by E. Klimov (1996), we received the following results. High quantitative indicators were set for the first and second items of the plan, which relate to the presence of the main professional goal and the list of immediate tasks (ranging from 82.52% to 96.11%). 67.96% of first-year students and 96.11% of third-year students have knowledge of the requirements of the psychologist profession to a man. This indicates a fairly good level of professional knowledge during the training period. Almost at the same level is the knowledge of opportunities and ways to prepare for the implementation of the planned professional goals. A slight decrease in all courses is observed in the items "availability of a backup option" and "practical implementation of professional goals", which indicates the vagueness of the professional perspective and individual ways of training in the context of self-organization.

At the same time, the growing number of answers concerning the knowledge of the requirements of the chosen profession, own resources and ways of preparation to achieve the goals in senior courses indicates that the duration and quality of training in high education institutions is an important

factor influencing the image of the profession based on the development of professional identity of students.

The results received by the questionnaire "Self-assessment" (Stolin, 1983) allowed to state the increase of interest in one's own personality and ability to self-government in the third year compared to the first year, which can be explained by the experience of third-year students in personal growth groups. This allows you to produce ideas of self-knowledge and self-improvement, as well as improve the ability to structure your own time. At the same time, third-year students are characterized by a decrease in the level of self-interest, self-acceptance, and an increase in the level of self-blame, which together with an increase in negative self-characteristics for the modified self-describing test "Who am I?" by M. Kuhn – T. McPerlenda, adapted by N. Ivanova (2012) is evidence of crisis trends in identity, due to dissatisfaction with the current situation of self-development and learning and is characterized by a desire for change and transition to a new stage of self-awareness, both personal and professional.

The use of the U-Mann-Whitney test allowed to establish statistically significant differences in the answers of first-year and third-year students in terms of "self-interest" ($p<.001$) and "self-government" ($p<.05$), first-year and third-year students in terms of "self-acceptance" ($p<.05$) and "self-blame" ($p<.01$). Statistically significant differences were proved in all indicators, except for the indicator "self-confidence", which is evidence of a certain dynamics of self-esteem with tendencies to increase its positive level, and accordingly the severity of emotional and evaluative component in the third year.

According to L. Shneider's (2001) "Method of Determining Professional Identity", the data received when comparing subgroups of respondents using the Fisher criterion allowed us to conclude that professionally mature, achieved identity is more common of third-year students than of first-year students ($p<.001$; $p <.05$).

Three types of identity were used for comparison, as "premature identity" and "pseudo-identity" were recorded in a small number of respondents who participated in the research (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Differences in the types of professional identity of first and third-year students*

Types of professional identity	Groups for comparison		Fisher's criterion	Level of significance
	Group 1 (n=25)	Group 2 (n=28)		
Achieved	15.00%	20.90%	1.20	–

mature identity				
Moratorium	27.10%	50.90%	3.75	p < .01
Diffuse identity	32.30%	21.80%	1.84	p < .05

Note: Group 1 – first-year students (n=25); Group 2 – students of the third year of study (n=28).

The results of the comparative analysis led to the conclusion that there is a relationship between the indicator "course of study" and types of identity. We found that mostly students who have a type of identity "moratorium", i. e. experiencing a crisis of professional identity, are in the third year, the differences between groups are statistically significant (p<.01). First-year students more often have a type of "diffuse identity" with undefined goals, values and time perspective of professional self-realization, differences between groups statistically significant (p<.05). In both groups, almost the same number of people with achieved, mature identity ($\varphi_{emp.}$=1.20), the differences are statistically insignificant.

The type of professional identity is determined by how consciously the respondent has chosen a profession. To clarify the interdependence, a comparison was made between the two groups of respondents based on their answers regarding awareness and desirability of professional choice. Group 1 (n=15) – "I chose the profession quite consciously; it was my old dream"; Group 2 (n=38) – we combined the two answers "I just didn't have much choice" and "I didn't care where I studied" (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Differences in the types of professional identity of students with different levels of awareness and desirability of professional choice*

Types of professional identity	Groups for comparison		Fisher's criterion	Level of significance Group 1 (n=25)
	Group 1 (n=25)	Group 2 (n=28)		
Achieved mature identity (*AMI*)	28.40%	13.00%	2.84	p < .01
Moratorium (*M*)	29.60%	42.00%	1.90	p < .05
Diffuse identity (*DI*)	18.50%	32.10%	2.32	p < .01

Note: Group 1 – conscious choice of profession (n=15); Group 2 – a random choice of profession (n=38).

The diagram clearly shows the differences between group 1 and group 2 in the key parameters of the research in Fig. 1.
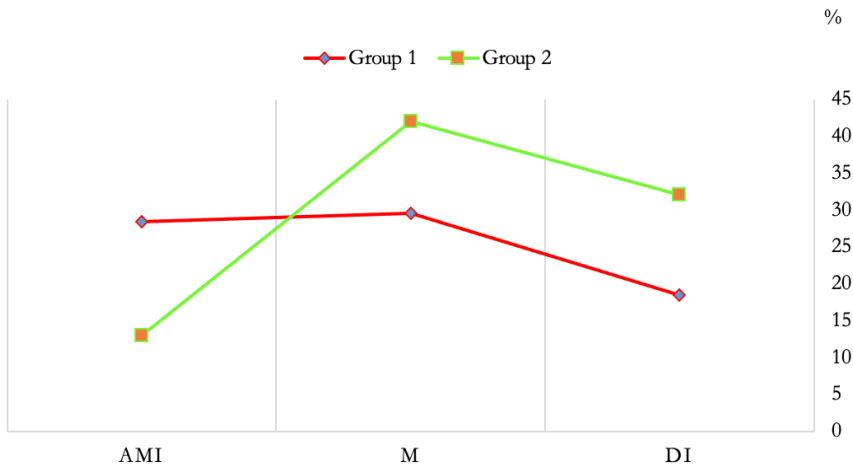
Note: Group 1 – conscious choice of profession (n= 5); Group 2 – random choice of profession (n=38); AMI – achieved mature identity; M – moratorium; DI – diffuse identity.

Fig. 1. *Diagram of differences between group 1 and group 2 by key parameters of professional identity types*

The data suggest that there is a relationship between the types of professional identity and students' assessment of the degree of awareness, thoughtful choice of their career path (see Fig. 1). Students who have consciously chosen a specialty and profession are more likely to have such a type of professional identity as "achieved mature identity" ($\varphi_{emp.}$=2.84; p < .01); for those whose choice was accidental, when a person almost did not choose independently, taking a passive life position on this issue – "I had no special choice", are characterized by either the type of moratorium, i.e. the presence of a crisis of professional identity ($\varphi_{emp.}$=1.90; p<.05), or diffuse identity ($\varphi_{emp.}$ = 2.32; p <.01). We assume that students-psychologists, who are characterized by the achieved mature professional identity, quite consciously choose a specialty to study in a higher education institution and are able to independently determine the educational trajectory of their studies, carefully complete it with selective educational components.

5. Research Limitation

We state that the dynamics of successful formation of professional identity of future psychologists in higher education institutions has a number

of restrictions. At the stage of constructing a hypothesis, we define a general assumption, regarding the significance of the conclusions that it is expedient to operate in educational and professional training not only to the acquisitions of psychological specialties, but also specialists of the sociological profile. Partially accounted for regional representation and submitted respondents only institutions of higher education of Ukraine. Of course, we allow that this can affect the purity of the experiment. The results and discussions are presented in one section, since there is a limited place that is caused by the lack of similar empirical researches. Represented conclusions that are aimed at the operationalization of acquired results are presented.

6. Conclusions

1. The psychological structure of the professional identity of student-psychologist combines three interrelated components: cognitive, emotional and behavioral. It is substantiated that the cognitive component of professional identity is a set of ideas about oneself and the future specialty that form the image of "Self" and the image of the profession. It is outlined that the emotional and evaluative component embodies self-attitude, as well as the student's attitude to his future profession. It is noted that the behavioral component of professional identity is represented by the general level of meaningfulness of life, the ability to set goals, the level of activity of students in positioning themselves as a member of a professional group. Such positioning takes place in the context of mastering the relevant professional ideas, norms, values and patterns of professional behavior.

2. The results of empirical research confirmed that the dynamics of successful development of professional identity of future psychologists in the learning process is the gradual formation of its structural components. Crisis tendencies in the identity of third-year students have been established. They are caused by frustration in professional and life choices, inconsistency of expectations and ideas about the profession and the realities of its acquisition.

3. It is proved that professional identity is determined, in particular, by how consciously the respondent chose a profession. Students-psychologists, who are characterized by an achieved mature professional identity, quite consciously choose a specialty to study in a higher education institution; independently determine the educational trajectory and carefully complete it with selective educational components.

4. It is established that there is an increase of interest in one's own personality and the ability to self-government in the third year compared to the first year. This is signalled by an increase of the ability to self-knowledge and self-improvement. We state that the third-year students are characterized by a decrease of self-interest, self-acceptance, which, together with an increase of negative self-characteristics is evidence of crisis trends in identity. It is substantiated that these processes are caused by dissatisfaction with the current situation of self-development and learning and are a desire for change and the transition to a new stage of self-awareness, both personal and professional.

7. Acknowledgments

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