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**THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION OF WOMEN AND MEN  
DURING THE ADULTHOOD CRISIS**

**PARTICULARITĂȚILE AUTOACTUALIZĂRII FEMEILOR ȘI BĂRBAȚILOR ÎN  
TIMPUL CRIZEI VÂRSTEI ADULTE**

**Abstract**

At the contemporary stage in which occur rapid social changes that force the person to restructure continually his universe of values and attitudes, the problem of the development of human potential becomes a current issue. For an efficient and continuous adaptation at the changes that appear, is necessary the existence of independent, active, tenacious people that always tend to the development of their own potential. This study aims to research the relationship between age crisis and affectivity on women and men during the adult stage. After analyzing the proper literature on the process of self-actualization we can state that ideas about the existence of an achievement potential at a person are widely developed in contemporary scientists researches of: A.H. Maslow, Assagioli R; James H., Rogers, C. Each of these authors come with an own vision concerning the process of self-actualization. We established, that the middle age period, according to several specialists periodization, refers to maturity or middle age and it includes between 35 and 45 years. There are several views on different aspects of existential crisis, often diametrically opposed. Some authors approach crisis as some negative

manifestations, deviant, others treat the crisis as a disease manifestation and associate it with a threat, danger, disaster. Experimental research's results let us affirm that the tendency of actualization represents a human basic necessity and depends of many factors. Women show higher indicators at frustration and anxiety, and men at aggressiveness and stiffness. We can certainly affirm that person's social-psychological adaptability in the period of middle age crisis is significantly influenced by adult's affection.

*Keywords: self-actualization, existential crisis of middle age, frustration, anxiety, hostility, stiffness.*

## **Rezumat**

La etapa contemporană, în care au loc schimbări sociale rapide ce impun persoana să restructureze continuu universul de valori și atitudini, devine actuală problema de dezvoltare a potențialului uman. Pentru o adaptare eficientă și continuă la schimbări e nevoie de trăsături de personalitate care relevă independență, activism, tenacitate, tendință permanentă de dezvoltare a propriului potențial. Acest studiu își propune să cerceteze relația dintre criză de vârstă și afectivitate, caracterul acesteia la femeile și bărbații adulți. În rezultatul analizei literaturii corespunzătoare asupra procesului de autoactualizare, putem afirma că ideile cu privire la existența unui potențial de realizare al persoanei sunt dezvoltate pe larg în cercetările contemporane ale unui șir de oameni de știință: A.H. Maslow, Assagioli R; James H., Rogers, C. Fiecare din acești autori vine cu o viziune proprie privind procesul de autoactualizare. Am stabilit perioada vârstei adulte mijlocii, conform mai multor periodizări, care afirmă că aceasta se înscrie între 35 și 45 de ani. Există mai multe puncte de vedere cu privire la diferite aspecte ale crizei existențiale, de multe ori diametral opuse. Unii autori tratează criza prin prisma manifestărilor negative deviante, alții – prin abordarea îmbolnăvirilor, sau asociind-o la amenințare, pericol, dezastru. Rezultatele cercetării experimentale efectuate ne permit să afirmăm că tendința de actualizare reprezintă o necesitate umană de bază și depinde de mai mulți factori. Femeile au demonstrat indici mai înalți la frustrare și anxietate, bărbații - la agresivitate și rigiditate. Putem afirma cu siguranță că adaptabilitatea psihosocială a persoanei în perioada de criză a vârstei adulte este influențată semnificativ de afectivitate.

*Cuvinte-cheie: autoactualizare, criza vârstei adulte, frustrare, anxietate, agresivitate, rigiditate.*

The existing process of globalization on the entire globe increases the interaction between countries to open new possibilities for the development of human civilization. Thus we are witnesses of a new challenge in the social, political and economic plan. The Republic of Moldova in recent decades knows a difficult process of Europeanization and globalization that negatively affects all segments of society. A large part of the population lived and continues to live the experience of these changes as a major social impact of significant negative elements. The person seems to have been left alone, face to face with all the complex problems of life unable to find elsewhere "rescue" than just relying on their own efforts and abilities. The person is forced to restructure its continuous universe of values and attitudes to adapt effectively and quickly to changes that occur.

For an efficient and continuous adaptation is necessary the existence of independent, active, persevering individuals that are always tending toward developing their own potential. The research of the self-actualization phenomenon is important through the features analysis of genders. The XX<sup>th</sup> century substantially modified the role of women in society, there have been significant changes in their social status. Moreover, knowing his level of self-actualization, a person can project clearly the strategies that should he follow during his existential route and evaluate his recorded progresses. We consider important the discussion

on psychological factors, theoretically and practically. It contributes to the development of a responsible attitude of the contemporary human in relation to his own self-actualization.

Life in modern society generates new fears, which we have to deal with every day. If the ancient period people feared most by thunder, gods and wild animals, today, all these are exceeded. The modern man is assaulted by a host of other fears: fear of others, of tomorrow, of sickness, of old age, of globalization, of disasters. All these fears cause a feeling of unease and uncertainty in everyday life.

At the Anthropologists congress held in France, coordinator Isabelle Rivoire, at the congress, said: "Modern man copes with three new sources of anxiety: the threat of globalization, environmental issues such as climate change, global warming, and rapid rhythm of life. The relationship with time represents a great importance for man. The person does not have enough time to dedicate to important things like family life and more. In this contest we often ask: How is or how was planned to be a modern person in the Republic of Moldova which is able to face the demands of our society and even more, to be successful?"

Analysing the speciality researches on this topic we can mention that the problem of self-actualization has in science a interdisciplinary character. We find the presence of these studies in different branches like psychological science, pedagogy and philosophy.

**The aim of the research** is to investigate the psychological self-updating of women and men during middle aged crisis.

The self-actualization phenomenon was first described by K.Goldstein and studied in detail by humanist psychologists A. Maslow, C.Rogers, R. May, G.Allport. The self-actualization phenomenon is approached by various fields of psychology such as: sociocultural psychoanalysis E.Fromm K.Horney and E.Fromm; psychology and gestalt psychotherapy F.Perls and existential psychology J.Bugental, R. May.

K.Goldstein describes "self-actualization" as a fundamental process, that is characteristic for every human and can have positive and negative consequences [11, p.142]. A substantial contribution in the development of self-actualization problem certainly had, A. Maslow, who considers that self-actualization is the main indicator of physical and mental health. In A. Maslow's opinion this concept may have at least three meanings. First, in his study "Motivation and personality", he defines self-actualization as the integral development of the individual (based on his biological nature) [4, p.119]. Secondly, self-actualization is defined as a process of personality development in which the human is released from certain deficiencies such as the neurotic problems of his existence. Third, self-actualization, is interpreted as one of the top hierarchy of human needs - the realization of human potential. It is characterized by the desire to discover his inner skills, his hidden potential and his personality.

Thus the author concludes "actualization is an intense and continuous process of gradual increase, it's a way of existence, it's a hard work and relationship with the outside world, and certainly many achievements.

Rogers defines self-actualization as the intrinsic tendency present in every form of life that is able to develop the potential to the highest level [5, p.172].

C.G. Jung considers the process of self-realization, as a process aimed at self developing. The essence of this process consists in the unification of opposing units of conscious and unconscious. In adulthood, the individual lives naturally the process of actualization or the process of rediscovery. If he manages the integration of conscious with unconscious, then, he's in a position to achieve a new level of mental health, a condition called individuation [17, p.82].

Ideas about the existence of an achieving potential at any man (initiated by A. Maslow, C. Rogers) continues to be widely developed in the works of contemporary scientists, including: Assagioli R.; James H.; C.Л.Рубинштейн.; C.G.Jung.; A.Adler etc. Each of these

authors comes with his own vision forward the process of self-actualization (based on the experimental facts of several years).

In addition, there are a number of psychological concepts such as self-development, self-realization, self-embodiment, self-fulfillment, self-improvement which are very close to the concept of self-actualization. It should be noted that A. Maslow himself does not differentiate these concepts, but uses them as synonyms [14, p.226].

In the Russian literature, the authors of experimental studies about self-actualization as a process, (Крымская, М. Л.; Либин, Л.; Толстая, С.В.; Сапогова, Е. Е.; Шершнева, Т. В. Etc.), essentially accentuate the need of forming the spiritual aspect. It's a value of personality reflected from the meaning of human life [13, p.72].

In the Romanian literature, the need of updating (the most commonly interpreted in terms of self-realization and self-fulfillment) is approached primarily as a psychological structure that provides perfection through the promotion of self-knowledge - as a first condition for self-actualization (Pavelcu V.; Cristea S; colt I.; Neculau A.) [1, p.145].

In the Republic of Moldova, at present, some aspects of the personality process of self-actualization were investigated in postgraduate by I. Negură. Until now, this problem has been studied by M. Cernițeanu that has addressed this issue in his thesis and tried experimentally to stimulate the development of psychological structures in the context of student learning. S. Tolstoya also deals with the concept of updating in her thesis on the topic of psychological peculiarities of updating middle-aged housewife.

Summarizing, it can be said that self-actualization as a psychological phenomenon affects the human body, somatic and psychically and is interpreted as: 1) a process of development of the human body through the discovery and implementation of its latent possibilities. 2) a personality characteristic. 3) as a specific need of human nature.

Adulthood is the richest and the most active period of life cycles. Depending on the variety or period developed by various authors in the various cultures, we can talk about different standards for adulthood such as: soul peacemaking, searching knowledge, individuation, wisdom.

Developmental psychology seeks to treat the whole trials from the perspective of individual adjustment to the demands of a mature adult. Adulthood is characterized by intense professional activity, social relationships and employment expansion and the expansion of the responsibilities of family life. Of course, the self updating study is relevant to all periods of life, but in this searching we refer to the specific process of self-actualization. The updating of middle aged women and men due to the fact that experience really nuances very much this process.

According to UNESCO periodization, the average maturity is defined within the age 35-45 years. For an adult personality is characteristic the desire to succeed himself in agreement with the stable values. It's significant for most members of a society. This is manifested in the need to expand the boundaries of their individual existence, to become members of society, to realize their potential in many ways and in various spheres, to live their lives far more intense. It is typical for the adult age the productivity – the possibility of creative manifestations through various ways of their business and social changes, they change the intimate interpersonal relationships, they become deeper and more interesting. Adult does not want to waste time in vain and plans rationally the future activities and tasks. At this age occurs strengthen of marriage, the libido is very active, the family is dominated by the desire of emotional comfort, and the growth of young children widens privacy.

The word "crisis" means a state of imbalance, the emergence of new needs and the restructure of human's motivational sphere. But, this phase of development such a condition is normal, so these crises are called "normative".

Х.Ремшидт, П.И.Буль, М.С.Лебединский, В.Е.Рожнов treat the crisis as a manifestation of disease, human health violations at somatic or psychological level. And Л.Ф.Брюдаль called this crisis "the period of potentially high risk" and associated it with an imminent threat, danger, catastrophe. However, some authors believe that crises are needed more than just a necessary condition for the further development of the individual [13, p.128].

In psychological science are known many ideas on different aspects of existential crisis, often diametrically opposed. С.Л.Рубинштейн, addresses crises as some negative events, deviant, considering that normal human development is possible without passing through crisis periods.

E.Erikson says "crisis doesn't mean imminent disaster, but a turning point and therefore the ontogenetic source of mobilization." For В.И.Слободчиков the crisis is a period of entering in a new existential sequence. Э.Ф.Зееп and Э.Э.Сыманюк authors associate the crisis with professional development. The approach of crisis as a general state of problems that the individual tries to cope with, but who can not avoid or settle in a relatively short period of time, is present at many authors. However, the variety of approaches adulthood speaks rather about the lack of consensus regarding the explanation of the crisis mechanisms and regularities, which requires further research in this direction [16, p.372].

Middle adulthood's crises, as well as any other growth crisis, relates to a normal situation, which means that are unavoidable for each individual. Middle age crisis was first addressed by CG Jung, who personally passed through a severe spiritual crisis at the age of 40 years. The well-known psychoanalyst considered crises an attribute of development. The second half of life, after CG Jung's opinion, a special meaning and purpose and essence of this crisis is the human encounter with his subconscious. And for this meeting to occur every individual must follow the transition from orientation to the outer world to the inner world orientation, the desire of conquest and control of the external environment for knowledge and deep reflection of his inner world. Under these conditions, the second half of life will serve to achieve wisdom, the culmination point of creativity, otherwise it leads to profound states of irritability and despair [3, p.103].

Normative crises of the personality development occurs as an inevitable process by which a person lives the main phases of the crisis associated with the restructuring and development of a new system of relations. During the period of crisis occurs a restructuration in the internal workings of personality that aims to overcome the crisis by raising awareness and reflection upon it and therefore transforming the individual relations system and its self representation. Dealing with critical situations depends on the individual's own work and his outcome is reviewing the meaning of life, of values and self-image. In other words, this is nothing but simply a transition of the personality to a new stage.

**The experimental part:** We conducted a study on a sample of 60 people consisting of 30 men and 30 women, average age of 35 years. The sample of subjects was conducted randomly.

**To respondents were given the following evidence:** Diagnostic test of social-psychological adaptation (C. Rogers and R. Daimond), Diagnostic test of self-esteem mental states (Eysenck), Diagnostic test levels of psychological stress (PSM-25 Lemyr-Tessier-Fillion).

We used the test Eysenck and aimed to identify whether there is some difference between affections between men and women found in adult age crisis. Thus, comparing the arithmetic average we obtained statistically significant difference in scale "anxiety". Analyzing the values of (t), we mention that women of adult age crisis are comparatively more anxious ( $t = -2.259$ ,  $p = .028$ ) than men. In general anxiety is a natural emotion of the human body. But a heightened state of anxiety denotes a signal that the body is overloaded and can serve as a warning.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>Anxiety</b>	Men	30	9,37	2,63247	0,48062
	Women	30	11,07	3,17244	0,57921
<b>Rigidity</b>	Men	30	10,23	2,58221	0,47145
	Women	30	9,67	3,77225	0,68872
<b>Frustration</b>	Men	30	10,23	2,64814	0,48348
	Women	30	9,50	3,29838	0,60220
<b>Aggressivity</b>	Men	30	10,03	2,74783	0,50168
	Women	30	10,10	2,78357	0,50821

t-test for Equality of Means								
Independent Samples Test		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Anxiety	Equal variances assumed	-2,259	58	0,028	-1,70000	,75265	-3,20658	-,19342
	Equal variances not assumed	-2,259	56,092	0,028	-1,70000	,75265	-3,20768	-,19232
Rigidity	Equal variances assumed	0,679	58	0,500	,56667	,83462	-1,10401	2,23734
	Equal variances not assumed	0,679	51,285	0,500	,56667	,83462	-1,10868	2,24201
Frustration	Equal variances assumed	0,950	58	0,346	,73333	,77227	-,81253	2,27920
	Equal variances not assumed	0,950	55,412	0,346	,73333	,77227	-,81407	2,28074
Aggressivity	Equal variances assumed	-,093	58	,926	-,06667	,71412	-1,49613	1,36279
	Equal variances not assumed	-,093	57,990	,926	-,06667	,71412	-1,49613	1,36280

It's well-known that anxiety is not an innate condition, but one learned, in this case we can conclude that lower updated people manifest this imaginary fear more frequently than those who tend toward their self-realization. A high level of this coefficient is characteristic to people who have a predominantly avoidant behavior and are not ready to take risks to achieve a goal.

To find out if middle age crisis is challenging stress we used the diagnostic test for psychological stress PSM-25 Lemyr-Tessier-Fillion.

The first table represents the average test scores obtained from the application of PSM-25

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Stress level	Men	30	122,43	28,71343	5,24233
	Women	30	108,83	27,24738	4,97467

In the table below we applied statistical technique independent Simple Test.

Analyzing the values of (t), we notice (t = 1.882 p = ,065), that there is a significance, but not statistically significant, which allows us to conclude that stress during adulthood crisis is influenced by our gender.

t-test for Equality of Means								
	Independent Samples Test	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Stress	Equal variances assumed	1, 882	58	, 065	13, 60000	7, 22699	-, 86639	28, 06639
	Equal variances not assumed	1, 882	57, 841	, 065	13, 60000	7, 22699	-, 86723	28, 06723

To find out if age crisis affects social-psychological adaptability of people in the crisis of adult age we gave the test C. Rogers and R. Diamond of the Diagnostic of social-psychological adaptation.

t-test for Equality of Means								
	Independent Samples Test	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Psychosocial adaptability	Equal variances assumed	-, 459	58	, 648	-1, 23333	2, 68460	-6, 60715	4, 14048
	Equal variances not assumed	-, 459	57, 897	, 648	-1, 23333	2, 68460	-6, 60735	4, 14069
Acceptance of others	Equal variances assumed	-, 644	58	, 522	-2, 76667	4, 29820	-11, 37045	5, 83711
	Equal variances not assumed	-, 644	41, 148	, 522	-2, 76667	4, 29820	-11, 44611	5, 91278
Inwardness	Equal variances assumed	-2, 435	58	, 018	-7, 23333	2, 97116	-13, 18075	-1, 28592
	Equal variances not assumed	-2, 435	57, 955	, 018	-7, 23333	2, 97116	-13, 18085	-1, 28582
Self-acceptance	Equal variances assumed	-1, 704	58	, 094	-5, 80000	3, 40431	-12, 61447	1, 01447
	Equal variances not assumed	-1, 704	55, 392	, 094	-5, 80000	3, 40431	-12, 62131	1, 02131
Emotional comfort	Equal variances assumed	-, 512	58	, 611	-1, 80000	3, 51685	-8, 83973	5, 23973
	Equal variances not assumed	-, 512	57, 876	, 611	-1, 80000	3, 51685	-8, 84005	5, 24005
Tendencies toward dominance	Equal variances assumed	, 490	58	, 626	1, 93333	3, 94763	-5, 96870	9, 83537
	Equal variances not assumed	, 490	57, 978	, 626	1, 93333	3, 94763	-5, 96876	9, 83543

According to the obtained notices we observe statistically significant difference only in scale " inwardness". Analyzing the values of (t), we mention that women of adult age crisis reveal a more pronounced internal control (-t = 2.435, p =, 018) than men.

Thus inwardness or internal locus of control involves the belief that personal power and control can influence the events. That their success is due to the skills and hard work, and the place of external control would characterize a minimal effect on the events, which are seen as a result of destiny or as the influences of other people. Women are self-motivated because of pragmatism. They easily withstand external pressures manifesting responsibility for their own actions in relation to men.

**Conclusion:** In this research we investigated the psychological features of self-actualization of women and men during middle age adult crisis. We can certainly say that attending adult middle age crisis differently influences emotional state of the person and is determined by the quality of self-actualization. Thus according to the research results women are more self-actualized than men, are more creative and can easier adapt to modern and daily requirements. Due to a great number of studies was established that in deep and long-term interpersonal relationships, are recorded analogies in the attitudes, values, and even personality traits, but also the preference for a complementary partner. In this order of ideas, we can conclude that the relationships between men and women in the Republic of Moldova have no similarity and complementarity.

We suppose that this is due to important changes in the social status of modern woman, the XX<sup>th</sup> century substantially altered the role of women in society. Because of this fact the woman at present has become equal in rights to decide important issues in the family. We specify that social status represents all the attitudes, opinions, behavioral reactions of which an individual expects from others by virtue of the position they occupy. We can conclude that women gaining their own social status began to hold central roles in all aspects of life improving its quality. Thus women besides the role of mother, wife and others assumed the role to provide the family with material and financial resources. This fact leads to a moral and spiritual overload caused by nervous system, and consequently, the failure of these requirements causes anxiety. The emancipation of women lead to increasingly difficult communication between men and women. Especially the adult age crisis by its nature assesses professional achievements and emphasizes more anxiety in case of an negative evaluation.

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