

# **DEVISING A METHOD FOR STUDYING SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MATURITY OF SPECIALISTS**

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents one of the most important tasks of the modern public service, which concerns the question of psychological compatibility of human resources.

The main objectives of the following paper is to find out the criterias that describe personal maturity and to make a tool for measuring the manifestations of those criterias. This tool can be used as method for the measurement of social and psychological maturity of a person. In order to assess the level of personal maturity, we have chosen certain maturity criteria based on the approaches of G.Allport, W.James, A.Lazurski, V. Zankovski, A.Maslow, N.Berdyayev and other theoreticians [3,4, 6,8]. G.Allport was the first to introduce a concept of mature personality in psychology stating that psychoanalysis never refers to a mature personality in terms of his/her maturity. Unlike many theoreticians, whose theories are built on the study of unhealthy or immature people, Allport never had any experience of studying psychotherapy and did not consider that medical examinations may be used for constructing a personality theory. He refused to believe that mature and immature people in essence have common features.

Taking into consideration the issue of employee selection there is raising a need to create tools which can measure personal maturity and which ensures the successful work of the professional.

As a result, a testing method has been developed which helps to assess the social and psychological maturity of a person. This method can be used either in personnel selection process or in the situations where gaining information about the person's social and psychological maturity is important.

## **Points for Practitioners**

The research has been realized over 3 years.

At the first stage of the experimental research 13 experts were involved from the field of public administration as well as the field of personality psychology.

The research involved 400 students from the public service and first and second –year Master's degree students from the Public Administration Academy of RA

**Key words:** career development, personal maturity, practical dependability, purposeful behavior, testing method

## **Introduction**

It is possible to implement the Human Resources Selection and Development State Service system if there are tools for personal assessment. The testing method can be used either in personnel selection process or in the situations where gaining information about the person's social and psychological maturity is important. In personnel selection and personnel development processes in public administration scope certain tools are required to assess the social and psychological maturity of a person. This is directly connected to the suitability to his/her job position and to his/her career development as well.

In explaining the personality maturity, psychological theories examine the person in the social environment where along with maintaining social relations he/she carries out certain activities. Bearing this in mind, personal maturity means implementation of specific targeted activities which in the modern world are embodied in the professional development. So professional development is a major aspect of maturity of personality. Professional activities are part of manifestation of the personality in the social environment, which means that specialist's maturity factors should not be overlooked in devising personality maturity criteria.

In terms of integrative approach, personal maturity is viewed as somewhat subjective emerging during the integration of social and individual components in the process of interaction between *person* factors and *situation* factors (sensible area). The ways of ensuring the emergence of subjective indicators of personal maturity are considered to be mastering, self-identification and ability to rise above certain circumstance. It is important to study the interaction and integration rather than changes in certain components of social environment. It gives rise to emergence of new subjective integrative factors affecting the development of personality maturity. The availability of a holistic three-component system of relationships allows one to adequately respond to external or internal processes under certain situations (which is in line with his/her own beliefs, group and social code) [5].

In order to assess the level of personality maturity, we have chosen certain maturity criteria based on the approaches of G.Allport, W.James, A.Lazurski, V. Zankovski, A.Maslow, N.Berdyayev and other theoreticians [3,4, 6,8]. G.Allport was the first to introduce a concept of mature personality in psychology stating that psychoanalysis never refers to a mature personality in terms of his/her maturity. Unlike many theoreticians, whose theories are built on the study of unhealthy or immature people, Allport never had

any experience of studying psychotherapy and did not consider that medical examinations may be used for constructing a personality theory. He refused to believe that mature and immature people in essence have common features. He believed that many of his contemporary theoreticians could not define a healthy man; they even did not make any efforts to describe him.

In his book published in 1937, he dedicated a special chapter to reviewing a mature personality, giving three criteria of personality maturity. The first criterion: multifaceted autonomous interests, extending his or her sense of self to other people and to activities beyond the self. The mature personality cannot be narrow-minded and selfish, s/he considers the interests of other important or closely related people as his/her own interests. The second criterion: self-insight, self-objectification. Here, he also includes humor which according to empirical data, best correlates with knowledge of oneself. The third criterion is the philosophy of life. The mature personality has his/her own philosophy unlike an immature person. In his later works he expanded the above-mentioned criteria, added another three to include six main criteria of mature personality [8].

Thus G.Allport in his theory identified six criteria as a maturity basis: an extension of the sense of self, warm relationships with others, emotional security or self-acceptance, a realistic view of the world, insight and humor, and a unifying philosophy of life. [9].

G.Allport believed that maturation of an individual is an on-going process lasting all his/her life. He made a distinction between a mature and immature or a neurotic person. Mature personalities behave independently and are motivated by conscious processes. Unlike them, the immature individuals as a rule are unconsciously motivated by childhood drives. Thus, G.Allport concluded that psychologically mature personality is characterized by six traits outlined below.

1. A mature person has an extended sense of self. Mature individuals can look at themselves from outside. They actively participate in labor, family and social relationships, have hobbies, and are interested in political and religious matters, if they consider them important. Such types of activities require the involvement of the true self of the person and genuine dedication. G.Allport believed that self-love is a prominent and inescapable factor in every life but it need not dominate since only self-extension is the earmark of maturity.

2. The mature individual is capable of relating warmly to others and establishing hearty social relations. G.Allport distinguished two types of warm interpersonal relations: the first is capability for love. The second kind is compassion. The friendly warm relationships manifest themselves as the individual's capability of deeply loving his/her family members and close friends. Meanwhile compassion is

demonstrated in the ability of a person to be tolerant in dealing with people which allows them to be very respectful and appreciative of individual differences in behavior and thought (both values and positions).

3. A mature person demonstrates emotional security and self-acceptance. Mature individuals have a positive perception of themselves and thus are capable of tolerantly dealing with frustration or annoyance as well as their own mistakes, without blaming themselves or overreacting. They are able to overcome stressful situations and their own negative emotions (e.g. depressive state, fears, (anger or sense of guilt) so that to avoid hindering the wellbeing of surrounding people. For instance, if they had a bad day, they do not act impulsively and take it out on anyone. And moreover, when expressing their opinions and feelings, they think how it would affect others.

4. The mature person has realistic perception of life, experience, claims and ambitions. Psychologically healthy people are accurate in their perception of events avoiding continual distortion of reality. Besides, they have the relevant qualification and skills necessary for effective performance and are capable of casting aside their personal wishes and impulses until an important task is accomplished. G.Allport quoted the famous brain surgeon Harvey Cushing, on this point: “The only way to endure life is to have a task to complete.” Thus, mature individuals are accurate in their perception of other people, things and situations; they have sufficient expertise and knowledge to deal with the reality, they strive to achieve substantive and realistic goals.

5. The mature person has self-insight and a sense of humor. Socrates taught that the first and foremost rule for a full life is *know thyself*. G.Allport called it self-objectification meaning that mature individuals have clear-cut idea about their own strengths and weaknesses. An important component of self-insight is humor making it possible to see the absurdity in their own life and in situations involving other individuals. Humor as seen by G.Allport is the ability to laugh at things that they love best (including their own personality) and value it. Correlated with the self-insight is a sense of humor as both are linked to self-realization [8].

6. Mature individuals have a unifying philosophy of life since they are able to see the whole picture owing to their ability to regularly and consistently single out the important things in their own life. G.Allport believed one need not be Aristotle and try to formulate an intelligible theory of life’s purpose. Instead, the individual should have a set of values covering his/her main goal or theme which will make his/her life important. Different people may formulate individual values underpinning their way of living. They may choose to strive to the truth, social welfare. According to Allport, the mature individual has values underpinning his/her life [10].

## **Methodology**

To realize the research we have used the following tools which are famous in scientific psychology:

- Analyses of already existing recourses
- Expert survey
- Testing

Following the identification of social and psychological maturity criteria, we started to develop the testing method. Case studies were prepared in order to measure each criterion. Expert group included master's degree students of the RA Public Administration Academy. The case studies, to which the experts gave the same clearly articulated answers, were changed. For each criterion 5 case studies were retained with three options and rated by a three-score scale: 2,1,0.

In order to measure the criteria for social and psychological maturity of a specialist through the expert survey, a relevant tool was needed to allow us consider the specialists in terms of their social and psychological maturity. This task put forward a need for devising a personal questionnaire which was accomplished in line with the principles of empirical psychology.

The problem of devising and adjusting psychological personal questionnaires still remains urgent. It is a formidable problem basically due to the challenge of ensuring sincere answers and the task of ensuring a situation when the assignments or statements are free from various types of subjective standpoints of respondents. The challenge of employing personal questionnaires was linked to the task of ensuring not only the sincerity of respondents' answers but also scientific confirmation of the outcomes. Even if in developing a test assignment the initial considerations of avoiding social approval are taken into account, the main challenge is how this or that statement is perceived by the respondent depending upon his/her life experience and how clearly it is articulated in terms of linguistic, semantic and cultural content [1, page 411, 2.]

During the process of devising and customizing the questionnaire, the social and cultural differences of perception of statements or assignments are rather difficult and sometimes even impossible to correlate with linguistic mode of thinking of another culture. In many cases the full empirical customization of the test is as hard as the development of the original method [7, page 33-34]. The theoretical background of the *Questionnaire for Diagnostics of Social and Psychological Maturity of a Specialist* with relevant conceptual approaches has ensured a strong precondition for devising the contextual components of the factors subject to assessment.

The computations of soundness and validation were accomplished, the questionnaire was tested on a hundred respondents: 30 civil servants, 35 first and second year students of the RA Public Administration Academy, and 35 other specialists from various organizations. Besides, for each factor assignment the discrimination ratio was computed, and in cases of recording weak indicators the questions and statements were repeatedly changed in terms of their content and once more rated by several tens of respondents.

During the questionnaire testing the instruction was refined based on expert assessment, and main psycho-diagnostic method requirements met: standardization, identification of standard ratios, checkup of the soundness and validation through their parallel testing.

We have checked the compliance of distribution of test indicators with the normal distribution function under the criterion of Kolmogorov-Smirnov. Thereafter we computed the sample mean and standard deviation of each factor and defined experimental standard ratios. For the computation, we used the SPSS-21 software package of statistical analysis.

Below are given the outcomes of development and customization of the questionnaire.

Table 1.

		Purposeful behavior	Practical dependability	Determination	Realistic view	Self-insight	Stability	Emotional balance
N		100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Normal factors	Mean	7.390	6.650	6.940	7.120	6.120	5.930	6.820
	Std. Deviation	1.435	1.500	1.441	1.526	1.665	1.945	2.027

**Table 1.** Empirical mean and standard deviations of questionnaire factors ( $n = 100$ )

As seen from Table 1, the distribution of the factors of purposeful behavior and realistic view is skewed towards the right side. Our explanation is that the major part of the respondents were employed and engaged in professional activities and had to cope with competition challenges.

Table 2 shows the low, high and medium rates of each factor of the questionnaire.

Table 2.

	Low	Medium	High
Purposeful behavior	1-6	7-8	9-10
Practical dependability	1-5	6-7	8-10
Determination	1-5	6-7	8-10
Realistic view	1-6	7-8	9-10
Self-insight	1-4	5-7	8-10
Stability	1-4	5-7	8-10
Emotional balance	1-4	5-7	8-10

**Table 2.** *Scaling of the prudential standards of questionnaire factors by standard scale of one to ten (sten).*

As indicated earlier, the descriptive validity of the questionnaire was checked by empirical assessment conducted in two phases. First, we checked the compliance of the statement with the factor, then the answer options were edited and the percentage of answers computed. Below is given the computed discrimination ratio.

Table 3.

FACTORS	DISCRIMINATION RATIO and LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE	
Purposeful behavior	0,33	p<0.01
Practical dependability	0,51	p<0.001
Determination	0,37	p<0.001
Realistic view	0,42	p<0.01
Self-insight	0,48	p<0.001
Stability	0,49	p<0.001
Emotional balance	0,54	p<0.001

*Table 3. Empirical mean of discrimination ratio of factor statements at relevant levels of significance.*

Notably, the factor ratios are obtained from among 5 factor statements and averaged. Initially most of them didn't exceed the value of critical importance although after editing and adjusting the questions, the test results showed the final data to meet the relevant requirements.

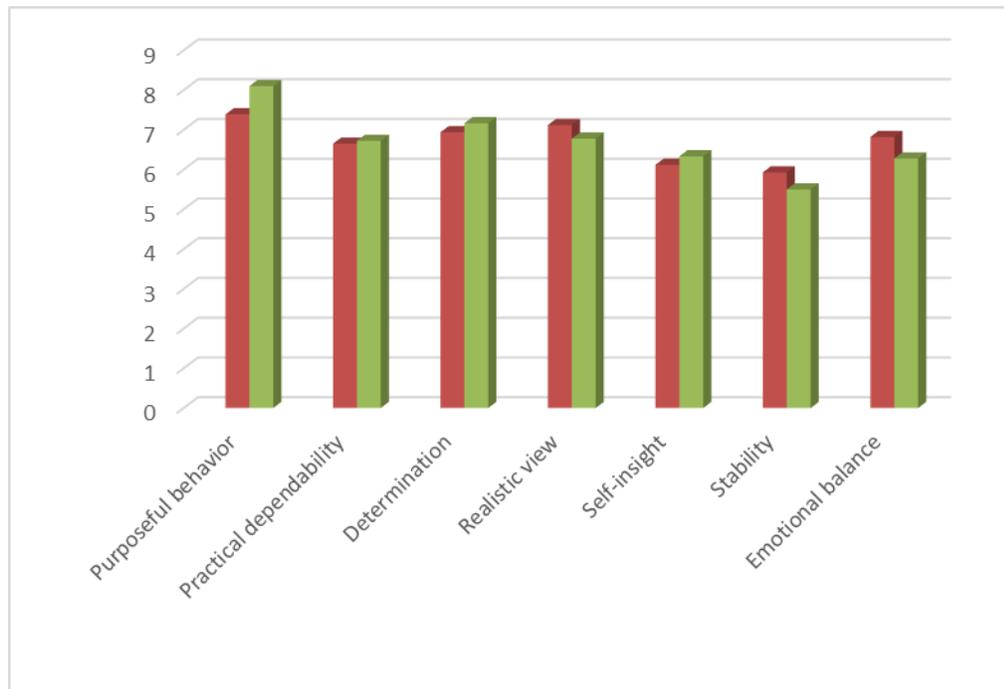
In order to check the data soundness, we employed the retest method with involvement of 50 respondents.

Table 4.

FACTORS	CORRELATION RATIOS AFTER RETESTING ( $n=50, p>0.001$ )
Purposeful behavior	0.62
Practical dependability	0.58
Determination	0.47
Realistic view	0.54
Self-insight	0.67
Stability	0.49
Emotional balance	0.61

*Table 4. Factor correlation ratios computed after re-testing of the questionnaire.*

The correlation ratios demonstrate a correlation between the two numeric rows, e.g. the testing conducted during 1,5 months among the same survey group didn't show any significant differences of test factor outcomes. The average values of the factors obtained from re-testing were approximately the same as the standard ratios as presented in a histogram.



As seen from the histogram, no substantial differences were recorded for any factor, thus supporting the idea that the prepared questionnaire is substantially stable. Based on the computation of the final and other indicators we can conclude that the questionnaire meets the metric and socio-cultural requirements for test development and customization and can be applied as a psycho-diagnostic method.

### 1.1 Research Outcomes

Based on the theoretical analysis, we have identified a set of criteria of social and psychological maturity of a person: social adaptability, sense of responsibility, self-insight, agreeableness, tolerance, ability to cope with stress, self-reliance, realistic view, purposeful behavior, sense of humor, curiosity, sociability, stability, determination, practical dependability, even temperedness, friendliness. The mentioned criteria were adjusted with consideration of experts' opinions. We selected an expert group to include individuals involved in personality psychology problems (candidates and doctors of psychological sciences). Under the said criteria, a scale of expert judgment rating was prepared in which each criterion was to be rated from 1 to five points. The survey involved 13 experts.

Based on the traits of social and psychological maturity of personality, the participants were asked to indicate according to 5-point scale the factors that, in their opinion, characterized the personality maturity (in which 1 indicates the weakest, and 5 - strongest factor). Besides, it was possible to add new factors if the expert believed that a certain factor was missing in the list and assign relevant ratings to them.

The expert ratings are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Criteria	Points
Curiosity	3,2
Sociability	3,2
Friendliness	3,3
Self-reliance	3,4
Agreeableness	3,5
Sense of humor	3,6
Ability to cope with stress	3,6
Social adaptation	3,7
Tolerance	3,8
Purposeful behavior	4
Practical dependability	4
Emotional balance	4,1
Determination	4,1
Realistic view	4,1
Sense of responsibility	4,1
Stability	4,2
Self-insight	4,5

The points assigned were grouped as follows:

0-1,7 – low,

1,8-3,4 - medium,

3,5-5 – high rating.

As seen from the ratings resulted from the expert survey, high scores were assigned to the factors such as: agreeability, sense of humor, ability to cope with stress, social adaptability, tolerance, purposeful behavior, practical dependability, emotional balance, determination, realistic view, sense of responsibility, stability, self-insight.

Subsequently, grouping the obtained ratings, we singled out the following criteria:

Purposeful behavior, practical dependability, emotional balance, determination, realistic view, sense of responsibility, stability and self-insight.

Let's consider in more detail the characteristics of criteria of social and psychological maturity of a person.

Purposeful behavior as a criterion of personality maturity is conscientious and stable orientation of the individual towards the outcome, i.e. the achievement of the goal. Purposeful behavior is the capability of setting tasks and goals and planning the path to achieve them. It is also the ability to cope with inner and outer obstacles. The mature person achieves a purposeful behavior owing to his/her emotional skills

and endurance. As goal setting is linked to life comprehension, the individual with sensible goals will consider his/her life meaningful, while upon achieving them s/he will be happy with it. Purposeful behavior is a trait developed during the life period and an attribute of the psychological maturity of the person.

Practical dependability is an important factor of social and psychological maturity of the person showing the individual's sense of responsibility. Practical dependability manifests itself in the formation and retention of the sense of security, and trust towards the individual in the social environment. Dependability is closely linked to the stability of individual's behavior and business relations and the extent to which s/he is capable of being accountable for his/her behavior. Practical dependability implies a clear perception of one's own resources and ability to manage them having an immediate effect on the promises given and kept.

Emotional balance is one of the factors of social and psychological maturity of the individual. It is manifested in situations, behavior and thoughts implying emotional tension. It is first of all reflected in the inner world of the individual subsequently being materialized in his/her behavior. And only the behavioral calmness which contradicts the excitement and thought of the individual, cannot lead to emotional balance. This criterion is closely linked to the certain type of the nerves of the individual which can be counterbalanced if the individual knows his/her emotions and during the entire life period develops the ability to refine them.

Determination manifests itself as the individual's capability of making and implementing important decisions. As the previous factor, this one is also linked to emotional and volitional traits maturing during the entire life of the individual. As a personal trait determination means conscious choice and consistency and gradually matures owing to social experience and ability to cope with inner and outer obstacles.

Realistic view as a criterion of social and psychological maturity of the individual characterizes the perception of the reality by the individual. Realistic view to daily activities is the true perception of one's own resources and phenomena in life. Realistic view implies critical thinking. The more defensive is the individual in perceiving the reality the farther s/he gets from the reality. The ability of the individual to cope with challenging situations allows him/her to perceive the life as it is.

A major criterion of personality maturity is the sense of responsibility which often manifests itself as inner self-control. It is the ability of the individual to regulate his/her own actions, emotions, thoughts and the quality of the life. The sense of responsibility exhibits itself in carrying out and controlling the actions conforming to individual's own possibilities and beliefs. As part of the sense of responsibility, the

component of social adaptation implies conscious reconciliation of one's own needs and those of the social environment. The mentioned reconciliation brings to a conscious choice. So the conscious choice of social code and one's own desires constitute the sense of responsibility of the individual.

Stability as a criterion of social and psychological maturity manifests itself as a steadfast and long lasting demonstration of beliefs, principles, and attitudes of the individual to various aspects of the life. An important factor of stability is the formation of individual principles, convictions. Stability is also attributed to life experience; it is gained by keen attitude to various difficulties in life. This criterion is also based on the ability to make a conscious choice. In various situations the stable person chooses the things that are most close to his/her own beliefs and principles.

Self-insight is an important factor of personality maturity. During his/her life the person achieves some self-insight owing to analysis of his/her own behavior and life experience. Self-insight is an important precondition for attaining harmony with one's own soul. It is the ability to understand one's own emotions, behavior, thoughts, biological and social nature, which gradually matures from the early childhood to the end of the person's life. It means understanding one's own inner world and self-acceptance. Self-insight allows the individual to become self-actualized. Together with other criteria of psychological maturity of the person it guarantees the use of the entire potential of the personality and brings him/her success.

### **Conclusion**

The outcomes of the theoretical research and expert survey allow us to conclude that in the present context the criteria of social and psychological maturity of the individual are manifested in professional and personal development being the major attribute of personality development. So the psychological science has a new task of identifying the person's professional level and its relation with the criteria of social and psychological maturity. Once this task is resolved, it will be possible to devise new approaches both in terms of specialist development and advancement of personal potential.

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