



# Features of the Structure of Addictive Identity in Adolescence

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## ABSTRACT

The relevance of the study of this problem is due to the lack of reliable information about the psychological mechanisms, phenomenology and psychological structure of addictive behavior of a personality in adolescence, which is the main cause of insufficient effectiveness for implementation of corrective measures. In this regard, this article aims to study addictive identity structure in the chemical (alcohol and drug) addiction both at the level of structural components of identity in adolescence and that of their structural organization. The leading methods of the problem study are the empirical methods of studying the structural components of addictive identity. The experiment involved 96 young men at the age of 18-24 years old. Of them 55 people are with alcohol dependence, 41 people with drug (opioid) addiction. The study found that addictive identity of young persons with chemical dependence (alcohol and drug) at the level of structural components is characterized by simple undifferentiated cognitive constructs meaningfully related to the object of addiction; flattened motivational profile, as well as a discrepancy at the level of the valuable component of identity. Identified in the study features allow to state that at the level of structural organization an addictive identity of young persons, both at alcohol and drug dependence, is characterized by disintegrated structural organization of identity. Clinical and psychological diagnosis of addictive identity structure with alcohol and drug addiction should be viewed as prognostic basis in the process of socio-psychological rehabilitation of young men with chemical addiction. The identified structural features of addictive identity serve as predictors in determining the risk groups by the given deviant status.

**Keywords:** dependent behavior in adolescence, addictive identity, alcohol dependence, drug dependence

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## INTRODUCTION

In the last 20 years, the quantitative and qualitative changes of both specific structure of dependence (extension of object space), and the prevalence of age-based structure have become a population-wide trend. The structure of mental and behavioral disorders, clinical psychologists have to deal with in the present conditions, radically and rapidly change. In connection with modification of mental and behavioral disorders structure and deviations at the present stage there is need for a new field of knowledge - addictology. The sphere of its main interests includes problems of dependent (addictive) forms of behavior at both psychological and psychopathological level. At the present stage of addictology development the study of the mechanism of addictive behavior formation should be recognized as a topical problem. Significant in this regard are the psychological characteristics of a personality that contribute to the development and the formation of this type of deviant behavior. It is mental and behavioral disorders characterized by dependence dominant idea that comprise the least developed in theory and resistant to therapy group.

Addictive behavior is a type of deviant (abnormal) behavior with the formation of the human desire to escape from reality by artificial changing his mental condition by taking certain substances or permanent fixation of attention on certain types of activity in order to develop and maintain intense emotions [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8].

The main motive of young people, prone to addictive behavior, is an active change of their mental unsatisfying state, which is mostly regarded by them as "gray", "boring", "monotonous", "apathetic". Such a young person cannot find in reality any sphere of activity that could attract his attention for a long time, to capture, to please or cause other substantial emotional and pronounced reaction. It is possible to say that a young person with orientation towards addictive behavior has a significantly reduced activity in everyday life, which is full of requirements and expectations. At that an addictive activity is selective: in those areas of life that at least temporarily, but bring a young person satisfaction and pull him from the world of emotional stagnation and insensitivity, he can be remarkably active in achieving the goal [9].

V.D. Mendeleovich [9] suggested the existence of a single and universal mechanism of pathological addictive behavior. Apparently, dependent personality development occurs in the process of socialization with participation of congenital and acquired cerebral abnormalities. It is possible that an important role is played here by the attained or unattained 'experience of separation' that occurs in childhood, and by some psychophysiological mechanisms that lead to infantilism, heightened suggestibility and mental rigidity. The process of the formation of particular clinical variant of dependent behavior disorders (narcotic, gambling, alimentary, sexual, religious) in many ways is spontaneous. Presumably, dependent personality creates a frame on which fetishes are strung. They may be resistant (mono-phenomenological) and unstable (poly-phenomenological).

Under addictive behavior there arises and becomes fixed an addictive identity as a form of identity disorders [10; 11; 12]. The change of identity is due to changes in social environment of an individual [13]. The author distinguishes two types of identity

transformation: 1) positive transformation of identity (identity crises, facilitating restructuring of the identity and addressing of certain human issues, important for him in this period of life); 2) the negative transformation of identity is characterized by the loss of significant landmarks for a person, leading to a sense of the "diffused" "self") [13; 14]. One manifestation of a negative transformation of identity is addictive identity, which is understood as the realization of a person seeking to escape from reality by mental status changes, by his uniqueness and originality [15]. Addictive identity is a pathological form, replacing the base diffuse identity on the basis of which dependence has developed. Addictive identity in general is destructive, as it appears to manifest the main content of destructiveness - causing harm to oneself and others.

N.V. Dmitrieva, S.A. Drozdova [14] consider a diffuse identity as a predictor of negative transformation. The mechanism of addictive motive fixation acts as the mechanism of forming addictive identity [16]. The structural analysis of identity is conceptually based on the provisions by H.Tajfel, K.L.Turner & C.S. Brown [17], Turner, K.L. Brown, C.S. [18], N.L. Ivanova, T.V. Rummyantseva [19] theories according to which, the identity structure consists of three components: cognitive, motivational and axiological.

Ts.P. Korolenko, N.V. Dmitrieva & E.N. Zagoruyko [7] define addictive identity as a complex system of factors and conditions caused by both external, social impacts, and internal characteristics of a personality. Addictive identity is a pathological form, manifested in the destructive path of life, system of values inherent to addictive personality and contradicting basic requirements of psychobiology. Addictive identity displaces insufficiently organized "basic" diffuse identity, on the basis of which an addiction has developed. As soon as addictive identity extends to more and more mental space, isolation of an addictive individual is growing, the system of relations is completely disrupted, acquiring object orientation. An emotional fixation on the object of addiction in people with the diffuse status of identity has a particular appeal. Ts.P. Korolenko, N.V. Dmitrieva & E.N. Zagoruyko [7] define this fixation as a "crystallization center in consciousness, the collection point, around which the formation of a new addictive identity, replacing previous diffuse, which was impossible to rely occurs". The main behavioral manifestations of addictive identity are: the desire to escape from reality, fear of life filled with commitment and regulations, search for emotionally rich experiences without considering the risk for life and failure to take responsibility for their actions.

Addictive identity forms an addictive personality with distorted self-concept, the features of which are described in the works by N.V. Chudova [20], G.G. Avanesyan [21], N.A. Sirota [22] et al.: "exaggerated" idea of one's own independence; refusal to follow generally accepted standards; the presence of a high level of self-acceptance and reduced self-criticism; problems in acceptance of one's physical "self" and bodily needs; emotion perception deficit (of people around them and their own); manipulating people, the use of ineffective means of communication; undifferentiated images of self-real and self-perfect; actual presence in the form of "self" features that reflect the conformal and dependent behavior in interactions with "others" [23].

Development and realization of identity, including addictive one, is carried out in the system of relations. The relationship, according to the theory by V.N. Myasishchev [24], is considered as a whole system of individual selective, conscious personality relations with various aspects of reality, which unfolds in three planes: intra-subject relations space, the subject - subject relations space, the subject - object relations space. Man is the subject of his own activity and creative activity; he also acts as the initiator of building a system of relations with the outside world, and as a converter of these relationships. The addiction phenomenon is realized in the system of subject-object relations: subject-subject relations are mediated by an object of dependence [25]. At that the change of subject-subject relations changes a basic level of relations system – intra-subject relationships, and addiction is defined as a value relation between subject and object of dependence, which consists in a certain over-significant attitude of a subject to an object and appears in the painful nature of their interaction. The use of psychoactive substances at any stage in the development of personality distorts the process of forming its identity, leading to the emergence of the addictive identity, for which psychoactive substance (object of dependence) becomes an integral part of the self. There is a change of the social situation, the restriction of perception of the situation, which subsequently leads to a change in the system of relations and behavior of a person as a whole. There occurs a subjective deformation. Man ceases to be the subject of his activity. His whole activity is directed to the object of dependence, he ceases to be the initiator of his artistic activity [26].

In his research D.O. Kamaldinov [27] found that in the development of addiction there occurs the reconstructing of social identity, i.e. identity crisis with the “dependent” or the “healthy”. This process can also take place against the background of the original diffuse identity, manifested mainly in personal uncertainty. The author argues that in the present conditions it is impossible to form conventional (socially acceptable) dependent identity, which subsequently leads to an involuntary formation of addictive, group, and subsequently subcultural identity. The identity crisis associated with the integration of addictive identity in a holistic view of himself (ego) has three outcomes: acceptance of addictive identity; denial of addictive identity; unrevealed or vague addictive identity through a transformation of its unrecognizable for themselves form against the backdrop of identity diffusion as a whole.

K.V. Zlokazov [28] considers the phenomenon of destructive personality, which is realized through the destruction of relevant to the subject social structures as a method for forming asocial identity, one of which is addictive identity. This destructiveness is defined as a form of the subject's activity, aimed at the destruction of external structures and the formation of their own, distinct from other structural image - identity. Destructive activity in this case is socially conditioned, and fixed in a motivational sense, regulatory sphere, as well as in social awareness in relation to the functions (roles, rituals), material objects (own body, objects and constructions) of outer space. Asocial nature of destructive activity in the formation of addictive identity is manifested in the exclusion of the subject from a social context, which leads to asocial effects, affecting the social functioning of a subject. Asocial nature at that is characterized by the author as a disruption of the social structures functioning by alienation of the subject.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Methods of research

In the process of research, the following methods were used: the study of scientific and regulatory sources, forming a psychological experiment, analysis and generalization of psychological experience, review, questioning, conversation, observation, testing, expert evaluation; psycho-diagnostic techniques; mathematical, statistical methods and methods of computer data processing.

### Experimental research base

An empirical study was carried out on the basis of the Kursk Regional Drug Dependence Clinic, under the terms of informed consent.

### Stages of research

The study of the problem was carried out in three stages:

- at the first stage, empirical methods of studying the structural components of addictive identity are as follows: the content of the cognitive component is represented by the system of cognitive constructs (a test of repertory grids);

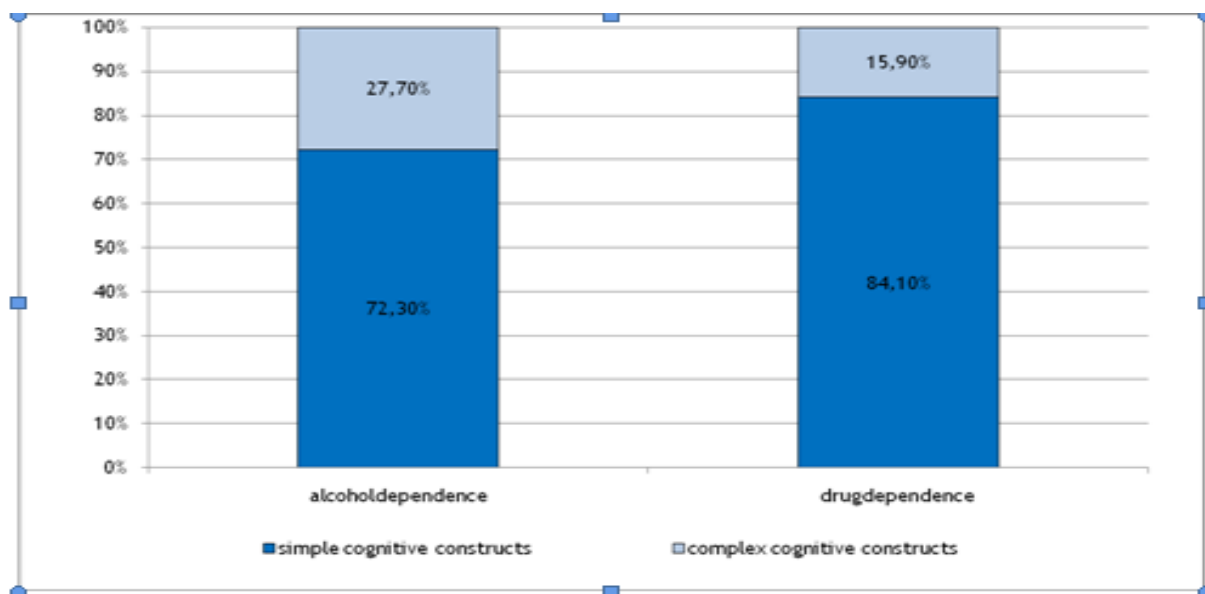
- at the second stage, motivational component is represented by the study of motivational orientation of a person; values component is presented through the analysis of two levels (the level of ideas and the level of the actual realization in behavior) of the organization of the value orientations system of an individual;

- at the third stage, quantitative and qualitative processing of the empirical data was carried out using descriptive methods (average values), comparative statistics - nonparametric test (Mann-Whitney U-criterion; the angular  $\varphi$ -Fisher transformation); correlation analysis (r-Spearman's rank correlation test).

## RESULTS

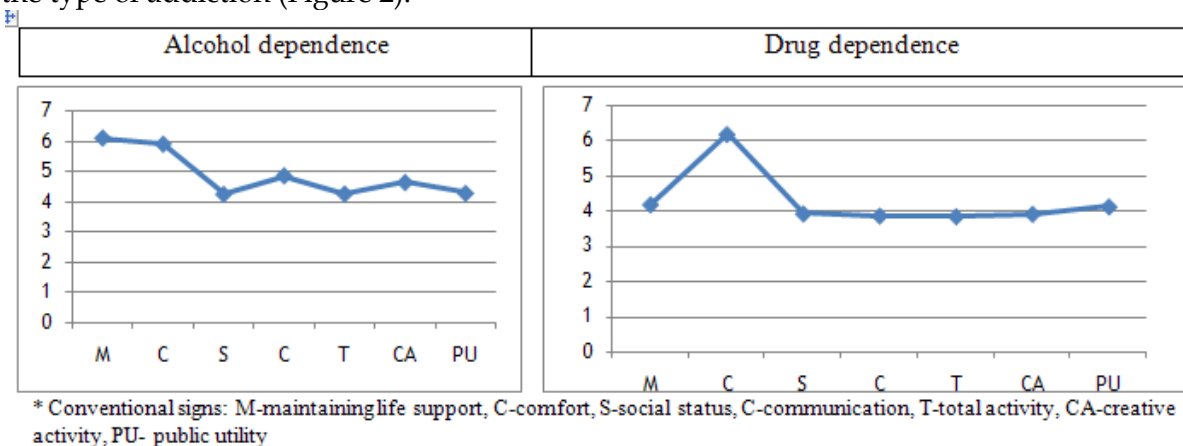
### Structure of Addictive Identity

The study of addictive identity of young persons at the level of the cognitive component presented as a system of cognitive constructs, at the chemical addiction (alcohol and drug dependence) found a significant prevalence of simple undifferentiated cognitive constructs, substantially oriented to the object of dependence (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Histogram of frequencies of cognitive constructs for different types of addiction

In the study of a motivational component of addictive identity of young persons in terms of the average values of the motivational scales motivational profiles were formed by the type of addiction (Figure 2).



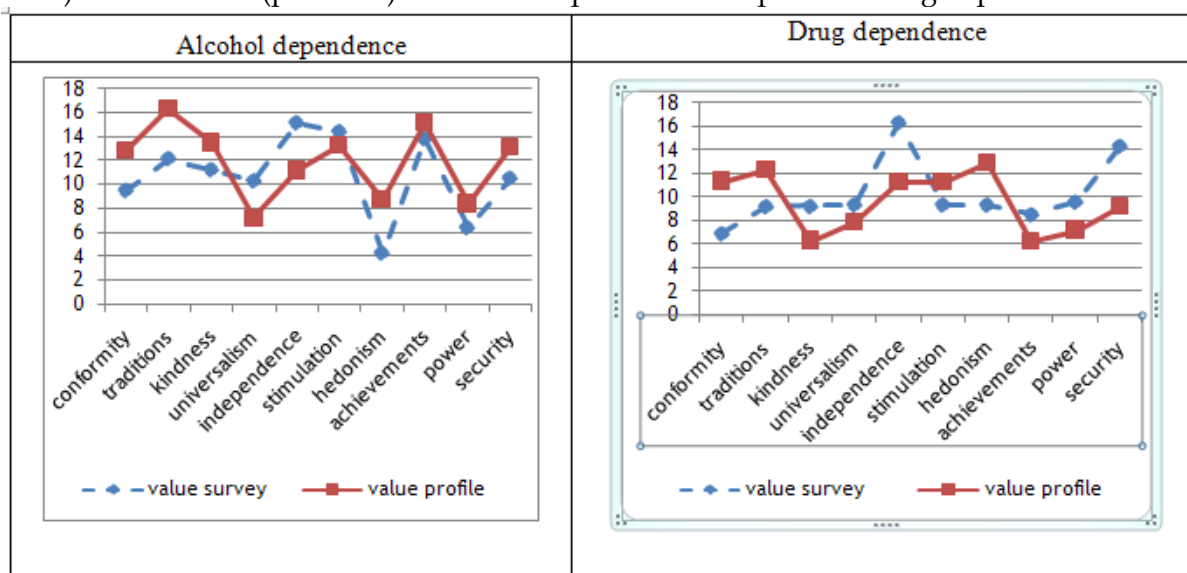
**Figure 2.** Averaged motivational profiles by the type of addiction

Both alcohol dependence and drug dependence reveal a flattened motivational profile characterized by low differentiation of motivational hierarchy of a personality, as well as a narrow range of motives. In alcohol dependence the profile is significantly dominated by life support motives and comfort ones. In drug dependence a flattened motivational profile is characterized by a predominance of comfort motivation at reduced remaining indicators.

Value orientation component in the structure of addictive identity is realized at two levels: the system of value orientations at the level of ideas (normative ideals level - values survey) and the system of value orientations at the level of their realization in behavior (the individual priorities level - personality profile). The chemical addiction reveals a discrepancy

of the ideas' level and the level of behavioral realization, that is, the value orientations, prevailing at the normative ideals' level, can not be realized in behavior (Figure 3).

As a result of evaluation of the significant differences of structural components indicators of addictive identity the following trends are revealed: in drug dependence simple cognitive constructs are significantly prevailing compared to alcohol dependence ( $p = 0.027$ ). At the level of the motivational component addictive identity is characterized by flattened motivational profile. In alcohol dependence in a flattened motivational profile life support motivation ( $p = 0.034$ ) and communicative motivation ( $p = 0.018$ ) compared to drug addiction are significantly prevalent. Value orientation component is characterized by a significant prevalence of security values ( $p = 0.034$  \*), achievement ( $p = 0.026$ ), hedonism ( $p = 0.018$ ) and kindness ( $p = 0.041$ ) in alcohol dependence compared to drug dependence.



**Figure 3.** The average profile of the value orientations system in addiction

## DISCUSSION

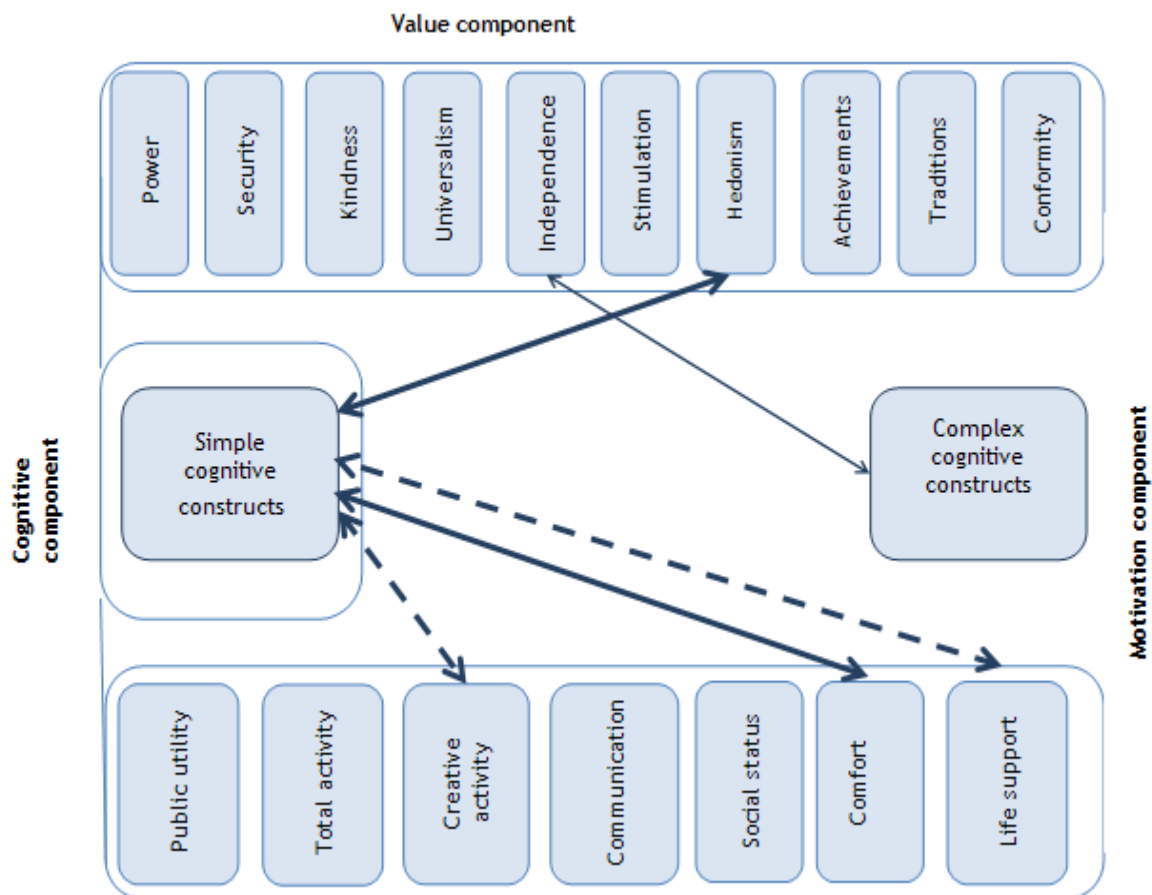
At the level of the structural components an addictive identity is characterized by a number of specific features: in alcohol dependence the following trends are revealed: at the level of cognitive component significantly prevailing are simple undifferentiated cognitive constructs meaningfully related to the object of addiction. Motivational identity component is presented by a flattened profile with a significant predominance of life support motivation and comfort. Value orientation component is characterized by a discrepancy of the value orientations system at the level of ideas and their behavioral realization with significant prevalence of hedonism, security and conformity values.

In drug addiction at the level of cognitive component significantly prevailing are simple undifferentiated cognitive constructs, meaningfully related to the content of the dependence object. Motivational identity component is realized in a flattened motivational profile with a significant predominance of comfort motivation. Value orientation component is characterized by a discrepancy of the value orientations system at the level of ideas and

the level of their behavioral realization with significant predominance of hedonism, stimulation and conformity values.

Assessment of the relations of the structural components of addictive identity was carried out using the r-test of Spearman rank correlation ( $r < 0,05$ ).

The structural organization of addictive identity in alcohol dependence is characterized by a statistically significant direct proportional relations between the index of simple cognitive constructs with comfort motivation ( $r = 0,47$ ) and hedonistic values ( $r = 0,54$ ); complex cognitive constructs and independence values ( $r = 0,42$ ); inversely proportional relations are revealed between the indicators of life support motivation and simple cognitive constructs ( $r = -0,39$ ), as well as creative activity and simple cognitive constructs (Figure 4).



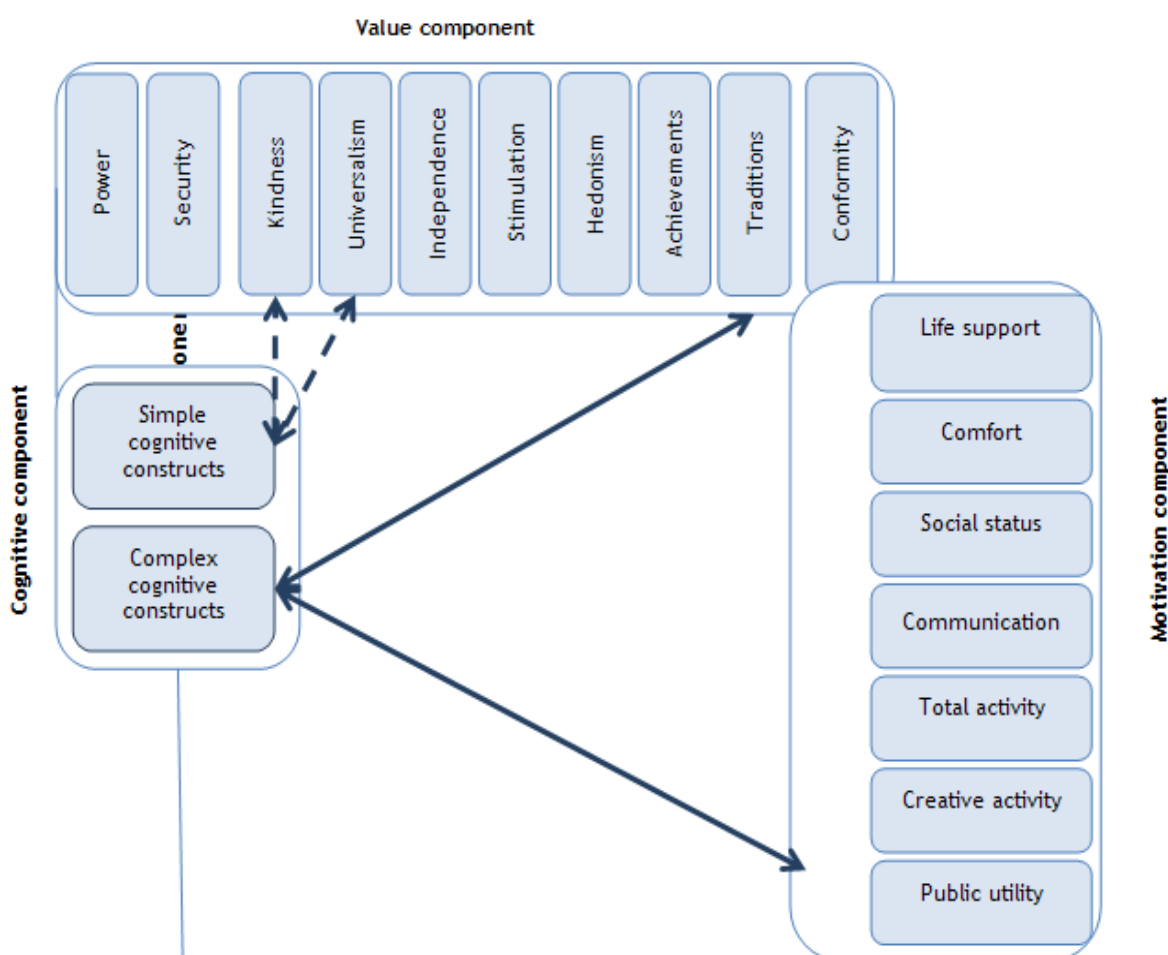
**Figure 4.** System of structural components relations of addictive identity in alcohol dependence

Calculation of the organizational structure indicators of addictive identity was carried out through assessment of the coherence and divergence indice, as well as through



calculation of the structure organization coefficient (SOC) of identity on the basis of obtained significant relations ( $p = 0,01$  and  $p = 0,05$ ). The predominance of statistically significant inversely proportional relations over directly proportional ones is reflected in the negative value of the structure organization coefficient of social identity ( $SOC = -2$ ). The findings point to the disintegration of the structural organization of addictive identity in alcohol dependence.

Structural organization of addictive identity in drug dependence is characterized by statistically significant directly proportional relations between the index of simple cognitive constructs with comfort motivation ( $r = 0,54$ ); complex cognitive constructs with traditions values ( $r = 0,49$ ), and motivation of public utility ( $r = 0,37$ ); inversely proportional relations are revealed between the indicators of simple cognitive constructs with the values of kindness ( $r = -0,58$ ), universalism ( $r = -0,53$ ), as well as motivational creative activity ( $r = -0,44$ ) (Figure 5)



**Figure 5.** System of structural components relations of addictive identity in drug dependence

Calculation of the organizational structure indicators of addictive identity was carried out through assessment of the coherence and divergence indice, as well as through calculation of the structure organization coefficient (SOC) based on the obtained significant relations ( $p = 0,01$  and  $p = 0,05$ ). The predominance of statistically significant inversely proportional over directly proportional ones is reflected in the negative value of the structure organization coefficient of social identity (SOC = -3). The findings point to the disintegration of the structural organization of addictive identity in drug addiction.

### CONCLUSION

1. Addictive identity of young persons with chemical dependence (alcohol and drug) at the level of structural components is characterized by simple undifferentiated cognitive constructs meaningfully related to the object of addiction; by flattened motivational profile, as well as a discrepancy at the level of the valuable component of identity.

2. In alcohol dependence a flattened motivational profile is characterized by a significant predominance of life support motivation and motivation of comfort; in drug dependence – by prevalence of comfort motivation with reduced remaining manifestations of motivation (life support motivation, communicative motivation, status motivation, motivation of common activity, creative motivation, public utility motivation).

3. Valuable component in the structure of addictive identity is characterized by a discrepancy of the value orientations system at the level of ideas and at the level of their behavioral realization: the values of traditions, achievements and hedonism are declarative.

4. At the level of structural organization an addictive identity of young persons both in alcohol and drug dependence is characterized by disintegration of the structural organization of identity, as indicated by a predominance of the values of divergence coefficients over convergence coefficients.

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