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Coping Strategies and Hardiness in Russian Youth in the Socio-Cultural Context of New Wars

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Abstract

Introduction. This study examines subjective assessments of military conflict (SMO) and hardiness in Russian youth with different types of coherence and intensity of coping strategies. For the first time, these variables were studied among Russian youth from different "regional circles of proximity" to military conflict. **Methods.** The sample comprised 583 participants, males (n = 66) and females (n = 517) aged 17–39 years, residing in three "circles of proximity" to military conflict. Psychological assessment tools included a semi-structured interview, the Assessment of Extreme Events semantic differential scale by T.V. Parfenova, The Perceived Military Threat Scale by K.V. Karpinsky, the Hardiness Scale by S. Maddi and D. Khoshaba modified by E. N. Osin, and the Brief COPE self-completed questionnaire by C. Carver. **Results.** Young people in the first circle use psychoactive substances much more frequently and deny the extreme stress of the SMO context. The second circle respondents use the Challenge strategy more frequently. Respondents in the third circle use the Instrumental Support Seeking strategy more often. Four types of coherence and intensity between coping strategies and a military threat are distinguished in young people, including (a) Type 1 – active, accepting, adaptive, (b) Type 2 – passive, emotional, adaptive, social support seeking, (c) Type 3 – passive, accepting, adaptive, and (d) Type 4 - active, undifferentiated, non-adaptive. **Discussion.** Commitment and Challenge strategies are more typical of Type 1 and Type 3 respondents, compared to Type 2 and Type 4 respondents. The lowest level of hardiness was found in Type 4 respondents with high intensity of all coping strategies. In the context of military conflict, young people with conditionally adaptive reactions, focused on active strategies and positive reappraisal that enables them to rationally perceive the situation, to see it

from different perspectives and to make life choices under these conditions, are the most resistant to stress.

Keywords

socio-cultural context of stress, subjective assessment of military conflict, military threat, types of coping behavior, hardiness, "circle of proximity" to military conflict

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Introduction

The "new wars of the 21st century" are a powerful contemporary challenge, determining the processes of socialization and psychological well-being of young people (Kaldor, 2015). They combine military actions (for example, Special Military Operation to Denazify and Demilitarize Ukraine) and non-military ("hidden") forms of confrontation, including economic and socio-humanitarian isolation, fake media support, information attacks, the use of destructive socio-political and socio-psychological technologies of influence, the use of methods of destruction of traditional values, national ideas and meanings, reducing the resourcefulness of the country, society, and individuals (Artamonov & Artamonova, 2023). All these actions represent a long-term, permanent, diffuse, and universal conflict based on the strategy of exhaustion, increased stress load, and increased social alienation of the Russian people. The threats of "new wars" include physical/psychological violence, direct combat, terrorist attacks, and other forms of violence; constant stress and anxiety associated with uncertainty and instability; loss of close relatives, friends and neighbors; conflicts with loved ones due to ideological disunity of the population; fear of general mobilization and death; stigmatization and discrimination associated with ethnic, religious or cultural origin.

Young people, as the generation of the country's future, are becoming the main target of destructive actions occurring on the psychological, economic, geopolitical, cybernetic, information, and ideological fronts. The task is to create a "convenient"

worldview for young people, to break the system of values and legal national culture, and to reduce their hardiness (Afanasyev, 2021), which should become an obstacle to harmonious growth, the interiorization of the Russian cultural code, and the formation of subjectivity. The high level of involvement of young people in the Internet environment actually addresses the problem of their vulnerability to provocative, radical or extremist content, cyberattacks and other forms and technologies of networks of "new wars" (Rudenkin & Rudenkina, 2019).

The main events related to real psychologically traumatic military operations include living in war zones and forced migration (Zakharova & Tsvetkova, 2020). Being at the center of a military conflict and forced migration, young people begin to experience three interconnected components: a threat acting at a distance, the assessment and emotional experience of this threat, the physiological and somatic consequences of these experiences (Malkina-Pykh, 2005). The main traumatic factors are an immediate threat to the life and health of a young person or his/her family, death of family members, and physical injuries. All this is exacerbated by media coverage of military threats. Consequently, social tension, stress, fear, suffering, traumas to the meanings and values of life lead to the dramatization of consciousness, which in turn causes variable difficulties in socialization (Karabanova & Molchanov, 2018), a decrease in resourcefulness and hardiness and a deformation of the image of the future (Tikhomirova & Samokhvalova, 2023). The consequence of exposure to stress factors is the emergence of behavioural disorders ranging from hetero-auto-aggression to depression with a feeling of "survivor guilt" (Eremina, 2011). Chronic stress, intense stress in the context of emergency situations create "favourable" conditions for the formation of deviant behavior and distortion of the self-image (Tarabrina et al., 2017).

The negative psychological consequences of war are typical not only for young people living in areas where direct military actions take place, but also for those living in areas that are not directly involved in conflicts – the "second and third circles of victims". The secondary victims are relatives, friends, and acquaintances of primary victims of military actions and emergency situations. The tertiary victims are all people living in the country where a military conflict takes place and receiving information on military actions via instant messengers and social networks, from the media, witnesses, friends, parents and relatives (Akarachkova et al., 2022). This makes traumatic impacts permanent, increasing the risk of post-traumatic stress disorders, which can lead to disturbances in regulatory mechanisms, depression, and phobias.

The attitude of civilians living in the combat zone and in the border areas towards material values and the material world changes dramatically. The perception that one's material world can be reduced to the size of an "alarm bag" changes his attitude towards the values and perceptions of his material world. Young people living far away from ongoing military operations also experience shocks and fears (fear of losing loved ones, fear of death, fear of the future, fear of waiting, fear of mobilization, etc.) (Lopatina, 2023).

Regardless of the proximity/distance to the hotbeds of war, young people are acutely aware of the potential risk of "losing their place", family disintegration; difficulties in family reunification, maintaining close relationships; a reduction in self-esteem, control over their daily lives is observed (Carballo et al., 2004). In the sociocultural environment of the changing modern VUCA world (Makeeva et al., 2021), we are witnessing the birth of a "fluid subject" (Sapogova, 2023b). Young people often show precarity, temporaryness, and unreliability of being, leading to the experience of the fragility of existence and a crisis of future life prospects. Its indicators include "short planning horizons", the absence of a holistic "life path", the mental "sacralization" of multitasking with minimal personal effort, absence and distance from civil activity, emotionality, social atomization, the inability to build and maintain stable social connections, etc. (Sapogova, 2023a). In situations of war, instability and uncertainty, a person is at the crossroads of three components that correspond to the cognitive, emotional and behavioral components of the attitude – the misunderstanding of the unknown, uncertainty and inability to act in a certain way, developed on the basis of experience (Bityutskaya & Bazarov, 2019). This internal dissonance requires a high level of hardiness and special coping strategies to cope with stress.

The new socio-cultural context undoubtedly embodies the problem of psychological hardiness and the search for ways to improve it. A large number of studies in this field focus on the study of personal qualities and abilities directly related to hardiness. In this sense, supra-situational or adaptive activity comes to the fore, which implies the ability of a person to rise above the level of situational demands, to set excessive objectives from the main task perspective, to overcome the external and internal limits of activity (Petrovsky, 2010), personal dynamism as the ability and willingness of a person to change in the absence of an urgent need for this (Leontyev & Sapronov, 2007), the individual's self-transformation associated with a sense of self-identity and the integration of new knowledge about himself into self-structure (Starovoitenko & Shchebetenko, 2020), the individual's self-change, including the ability to recognize the "challenges" of the situation and the need for change, the willingness to accept this need and act in accordance with the perceived challenges (Manukyan et al., 2020), flexibility of action and decision-making, allowing not only constructively to rebuild life under new conditions, but also to accept global changes (Bityutskaya, 2022), the ability to predict possibilities (Znakov, 2023), the possibility of risk in thinking (Kornilova, 2015), preparation for the future, such as the ability to withdraw from expectations with already established plans, the flexibility to rebuild the inner world in response to changes in social conditions, the ability to stay in touch with people and to view future tasks optimistically. An important predictor of sustainability is hardiness as an integral characteristic of personality, which affects the success of a person in overcoming life's challenges, includes involvement in the life process, readiness to control significant events in one's life and acceptance of life's challenges (Khoshaba & Maddi, 1999). Hardiness as a fundamental resource to overcome

prevents the emergence of mental stress in stressful and difficult situations (Leontyev & Rasskazova, 2016).

Global studies on human hardiness in war situations show the importance of certain coping strategies for sustainability and survival, strategies that correspond to the coping style associated with hardiness (Odintsova et al., 2017). Therefore, an analysis of the coping strategies used by people during World War II, based on diary entries, showed that people mainly used problem-oriented strategies aimed at finding effective ways to escape bombing, reduce damage caused by artillery, strategies to find social support, and emotion-oriented strategies that allowed to regulate the strength and intensity of the emotional response to a threat. It was found that denial and distancing from the threat were dominant; people showed humour, expressed hope and a positive attitude. This allowed them to maintain their strength and restore resources despite the threat to their lives (Middendorf, 2024). A study of psychological coping in the Romanian population subjectively involved in the situation in Ukraine showed other characteristics: according to the results, focusing on emotions and their release, as well as on behavioral detachment, were the dominant strategies of psychological coping in young people, leading to an increase in anxiety and a decrease in subjective well-being. On the other hand, positive reinterpretation and growth were associated with a reduction in anxiety, a higher level of general health and a better quality of life (Crișan et al., 2023).

The authors explain the apparently unexpected results by the fact that the focus on a traumatic event and/or the expression of associated feelings can actually become a maladaptive strategy and increase anxiety when used excessively (Liverant, Hofmann & Litz, 2004). Furthermore, this strategy can be a potential longitudinal mediator between severe depression (caused by various traumatic events) and generalized anxiety disorder (Marr, Zainal & Newman, 2022). Behavioral withdrawal, which involves reducing a person's efforts to cope with a stressor, is also consistently associated with anxiety, apathy, depression and general poor mental health (Held et al., 2011).

Interesting data were obtained from studies on Ukrainian samples and summarized in a meta-analysis. It was found that strategies such as emotion-oriented strategies, distraction through participation in various activities, sedative medication use, humbleness and avoidance are not effective in a military context and do not increase hardiness. On the contrary, the predictors of hardiness were the ability to maintain close social ties, the presence of support networks, religion, and hope for the future; the use of story-telling in social networks and problem-oriented strategies were also effective strategies (Rizzi et al., 2023).

Currently, all young people living in the territory of the Russian Federation are involved in some way in a military context, while strategies to cope with this situation, a situation of military threat, have not been studied in Russian samples. Most global studies in this field focus on Ukrainian and European samples. The study of coping strategies and hardiness, together with knowledge of the characteristics of perception of SMO in young

people with different combinations of coping strategies, can help to predict social risks and develop programmes to teach coping strategies that ensure adaptation and normal functioning in a modern context.

Research questions: What are subjective assessments of the military threat and coping with it among Russian young people from different "circles of proximity" to the special military operation (SMO)? What are the differences in hardiness indicators among young people with different types of coherence and intensity of coping strategies in the context of military conflict?

This study aims to investigate the characteristics of subjective assessments of the situation of military conflict and hardiness among Russian young people with different types of coherence and intensity of coping strategies.

Main hypothesis: There are differences in subjective assessments of military threats and indicators of hardiness among Russian young men and women with different types of coherence and intensity of coping strategies.

Particular hypotheses:

1. There are differences in subjective assessments and experiences of a military threat, including its consequences, among young people from different "circles of proximity" to the SMO (residents of front-line territories, residents of border regions and residents of the conditionally remote regions of the central federal district);

2. There are different types of coherence and intensity of coping strategies with the situation of a military threat among young people from different "proximity circles" to the SMO;

3. Young people with different types of coherence and intensity of coping strategies may have different characteristics of hardiness.

Methods

Participants

The study sample comprised a total of 583 participants living in various regions of the Russian Federation, males (n = 66) and females (n = 517), aged 17 to 39 years (M = 20.7; SD = 4.05). The sample included only respondents who had given informed consent to participate in the study. Before the test, the respondents were informed of their voluntary participation, the possibility to withdraw from the psychological assessment process at any stage, the confidentiality of the process and the use of results strictly for scientific purposes and without any connection with personal data allowing identification of a person.

Respondents were initially divided into 3 circles of proximity to the special military operation. The criterion was territorial proximity to the place of the SMO:

- Circle 1 comprised 285 respondents living in the Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics.
- Circle 2 comprised 110 respondents living in the Voronezh, Kursk, and Belgorod regions.
- Circle 3 comprised 188 respondents living in remote regions – Kostroma, Yaroslavl, Ivanovo, Moscow, Leningrad, Nizhny Novgorod regions, as well as Khabarovsk Krai.

Currently, 241 participants indicated that they were in a romantic relationship; 58 participants were married; 282 participants were not in a relationship at the moment; 529 participants were not militarians.

Research methods

Due to the heterogeneity of empirical references (coping strategies, hardiness and assessment of the SMO context, its subjectively meaningful consequences), the study integrated the nomothetic and idiographic approaches.

Methodological complex

The methodological complex included:

1. A semi-structured interview with a biographical section to identify gender, age, occupation, presence of close relationships, citizenship, presence / absence of military service of the respondents themselves and their relatives, and a substantive interview devoted to the assessment of the subjectively significant consequences of the situation of a special military operation (hereinafter - SMO), the combination of the SMO situation with personal losses. The method of content analysis was used for processing.

2. The Assessment of Extreme Events semantic differential scale (T. V. Parfenova, 2022). This psychological assessment tool is designed to study the personal meaning and phenomenology of extreme events. The respondents were offered a situation of a special military operation for assessment. When processing the results, the values were calculated for the following eight semantic differential scales: "Immorality of the event", "Psychological remoteness", "Subjective significance of the event", "Subjective assessment of the scope of the event", "Subjective assessment of the extremality of the event", "Emotional context of the event", "Subjective duration of the event", "Subjective assessment of the uncertainty of the event", reflecting various aspects of the personal meaning of the assessed event. The sum of points for each scale shows the intensity (strength) and direction of the subjective experience of the event. The diagnostic tool is contextualized, which allows some changes in the instructions in terms of mentioning extreme events to specify the subject of the assessment.

3. The Perceived Military Threat Scale (K. V. Karpinsky, 2015). A standardized multidimensional personality questionnaire, designed to measure cognitive, emotional, regulatory-behavioral components as well as the overall intensity of a military threat

experience. The 10 elements of the technique are divided into three subscales corresponding to the cognitive, affective and regulatory-behavioral components of perceived military threat. Intercorrelations among the identified subscales of the diagnostic tool is in the range of 0.65–0.69; the Cronbach $\alpha \geq 0.70$ for each scale.

4. The Hardiness Scale (S. Maddi, D. Khoshaba, 1984/2001), screening version modified by E. N. Osin (2013). This assessment tool examines psychological factors that help to cope with stress successfully and reduce and prevent internal tensions in stressful situations. The questionnaire contains 12 statements and includes the following 3 subscales: Commitment, Control, and Challenge; the Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$.

5. Brief COPE (C. Carver, 1987), tested by T. L. Kryukova, N. S. Shipova, T. P. Opekina (2020), developed within the framework of the theory of stress and coping by R. Lazarus and measures coping strategies as situational behavior. The methodology includes 28 items that reflect 14 coping strategies. The respondents were asked to assess which strategies/methods they used and to what extent in a stressful situation in the SMO context.

Mathematical methods for data analysis: descriptive statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality, Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, Kruskal-Wallis H-test for the comparison of more than two independent samples, one-way analysis of variance for the comparison of three and more independent samples, K-means cluster analysis to identify groups of respondents using similar types of coping behavior (combinations and intensity of coping strategies), and Fisher criterion (α).

Procedure

In the first stage, the results of the descriptive statistics of all standardized methods were analyzed and a comparison of the mean scores in the total sample of respondents with the normative data (n = 583) was made. In the second stage of the study, a cluster analysis of observations was carried out on the total sample using the K-means algorithm. Clustering was based on the results of the Brief COPE (C. Carver, 1987, modified by T. L. Kryukova, N. S. Shipova, and T. P. Opekina). Four clusters were identified that reflect different types of coherence and intensity of coping strategies: Cluster 1 (n = 159; m = 21.5, of whom 77 participants (48.4 %) were from the 1st circle of proximity, 34 participants (21.4 %) were from the 2nd circle, and 48 participants (30.2 %) were from the 3rd circle); Cluster 2 (n = 193; m = 20.7, of whom 81 participants (42 %) were from the 1st circle of proximity, 40 participants (20.7 %) were from the 2nd circle, and 72 (37.3 %) were from the 1st circle); Cluster 3 (n = 172; m = 20.3, of whom 92 participants (53.5 %) were from the 1st circle of proximity, 30 participants (17.4 %) were from the 2nd circle, 50 participants (29.1 %) were from the 3rd circle); Cluster 4 (n = 59; m = 19.6, of whom 38 participants (64.4 %) were from the 1st circle of proximity, 6 participants (10.2 %) were from the 2nd circle, 15 participants (25.4 %) were from the 3rd circle). In the third stage, a comparative analysis

of the indicators of a military threat, the assessment of the extremeness of the event and the assessment of the subjectively significant consequences of the SMO were carried out in four comparison groups identified as a result of clustering.

Results

In the study of 583 young people living in different regions of the Russian Federation, perception of the social context and the experience of military threat, perception of the SMO, severity and intensity of coping strategies and hardiness of the respondents were determined (Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics on estimated parameters in the empirical study (N = 583) and their comparison with normative values

Parameters	Empirical values (m(sd))	Normative values (m(sd))
	Hardiness	
Commitment	7,72 (3,45)	7,94 (3,45)
Control	7,35 (2,68)	7,79 (2,55)
Challenge	7,26 (3,08)	7,90 (2,82)
	Coping-strategy	
Self-distraction	5,48 (1,74)	5,27 (1,42)
Active coping	4,62 (1,73)	5,79 (1,39)

Parameters	Empirical values (m(sd))	Normative values (m(sd))
Denial	3,53 (1,66)	2,92 (1,23)
Psychoactive substance use	2,70 (1,46)	2,88 (1,21)
Emotional support seeking	5,05 (1,81)	5,11 (1,50)
Instrumental support seeking	4,58 (1,84)	4,53 (1,42)
Avoidance	3,42 (1,57)	3,06 (1,10)
Emotional outburst	4,49 (1,75)	4,58 (1,35)
Positive reappraisal	4,47 (1,86)	6,00 (1,39)
Planning	4,98 (1,78)	5,68(1,34)
Humor	3,54 (1,73)	5,24 (1,57)
Acceptance	6,05 (1,66)	6,42 (1,11)
Turning to religion	3,71 (1,87)	3,28(1,56)

Parameters	Empirical values (m(sd))	Normative values (m(sd))
Self-accusation	3,46 (1,68)	4,10 (1,47)

The analysis of mean scores, standard deviations, and comparisons with normative values indicated that hardiness parameters such as commitment, control, and challenge were within normative values in the sample of the empirical study.

Then 14 coping strategies of young people were analyzed and compared to normative values. We found that the "Denial" strategy was more intense; "Active coping", "Positive reappraisal", and "Humor" were less pronounced. The remaining strategies were within the norms. To cope, the strategies of "Acceptance", "Self-distraction" and "Emotional support seeking" were most often used.

The differences in coping strategies in the three comparison groups belonging to conditional circles of proximity to the military conflict zone have also been analyzed. Several significant differences were identified with the Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 2).

Table 2
Differences in the hardiness and coping strategies scores, the Kruskal-Wallis test

Coping strategies	1st proximity circle (n=285)	2nd proximity circle (n=110)	3rd proximity circle (n=188)	Significance level (p)
Challenge	282,9	335,9	279,9	0,01
Self-accusation	306,1	258,7	290,1	0,03
Acceptance	266,5	315,3	317,0	0,00
Planning	271,8	310,9	311,5	0,01

Coping strategies	1st proximity circle (n=285)	2nd proximity circle (n=110)	3rd proximity circle (n=188)	Significance level (p)
Instrumental support seeking	278,8	283,9	316,7	0,04
Psychoactive substance use	312,4	263,7	277,6	0,00
Denial	316,3	263,5	271,8	0,00

This study revealed that those living in areas proximate to military actions (Circle 1 - LPR, DPR) are significantly more likely to use "Psychoactive substances" and "Denial"; to a lesser extent, they are characterized by "Planning" and "Acceptance" of the situation. Residents of the most remote territories (Circle 3) more often use the strategy of "Instrumental support seeking". Residents of border territories (Belgorod, Voronezh) have significantly higher scores in the "Challenge" strategy and, to a lesser extent, use "Self-accusation".

For a more detailed analysis of coping behavior in the aggregate of coping strategies and their combinations in a total sample of 583 respondents, a cluster analysis using the K-means algorithm was used. As a result, four clusters were identified, reflecting different types of coherence and intensity of respondent coping strategies. Cluster 1 included 159 respondents with the following most intensive strategies: Self-Distraction (m = 5.77), Positive Reappraisal (m = 5.36), Planning (m = 5.20) and Acceptance (6.74). The following strategies were not typical for the respondents of this cluster: Denial (m = 2.56), Psychoactive Substance Use (m = 2.04), Avoidance (m = 2.68), Humor (m = 2.77), and Self-Accusation (m = 2.74). In this case, we are talking about respondents who accept the situation and try to adapt, build a life strategy in a new socio-cultural context.

The number of respondents in Cluster 2 was 193, which was the largest. The most intensive strategies in this cluster were Self-Distraction (m = 6.17), Emotional Support Seeking (m = 6.26), Instrumental Support Seeking (m = 5.69), Emotional Outburst (m = 5.65), Planning (m = 5.82) and Acceptance (m = 6.37); the least expressed strategy was Psychoactive Substance Use (m = 2.52). The other strategies had an average intensity. Respondents in this group are characterized by emotion-oriented coping and adaptation to the current situation. In this case, the activity is first of all aimed at searching for various types of support and then at adapting and adjusting.

Cluster 3 included 172 respondents with average intensity of Self-Distraction (m = 4.08) and Acceptance (m = 4.78) coping strategies and low intensity of the following coping strategies: Active Coping (m = 2.98), Psychoactive Substance Use (m = 2.39), Instrumental Support Seeking (m = 2.97), Avoidance (m = 2.98), Positive Reappraisal (m = 2.98), Humor (m = 2.58), Turning to Religion (m = 2.69), and Self-Accusation (m = 2.66). The respondents to this group are not characterized by coping intensity and high stress levels.

Cluster 4 contained only 59 respondents, but had a high intensity of all measured coping strategies (m ≥6), indicating a high intensity of the experienced stress and attempts to cope with it to adapt to the current situation. The reliability of differences in the expression of all coping strategies among respondents from different clusters was confirmed by analysis of variance (p ≤0.000).

Afterwards, the hypothesis was tested that hardiness and the perception of the SMO situation as a sociocultural context would differ among respondents in different clusters. Using variance analysis, the differences in hardiness, i.e. in the parameters of Commitment and Challenge, were found (Table 3). The Control characteristic had a heterogeneous variance. Therefore, it was analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis test.

Table 3

Differences in hardiness among respondents of different types of coping behavior (clusters)

	Mean (m)	Standard deviation (sd)	Fisher criterion (F)	Significance level (p)
		Commitment		
Cluster 1	12,69	3,28		
Cluster 2	11,16	3,23		
			17,59	0,000
Cluster 3	12,32	3,31		
Cluster 4	9,46	3,51		
		Challenge		
Cluster 1	11,95	2,89		
Cluster 2	10,67	2,74		
			19,39	0,000
Cluster 3	12,05	2,91		
Cluster 4	9,24	3,39		

Commitment and Challenge as hardiness parameters are more characteristic of respondents from Cluster 1 and Cluster 3 than of respondents from Cluster 2 and Cluster 4. In this case, the lowest level of hardiness is observed among respondents of Cluster 4 with high intensity of all coping strategies.

According to the Control hardiness characteristic, using the Kruskal-Wallis test, reliable and significant differences were also revealed ($\chi 2 = 46.26$ $p \leq 0.000$); the lowest average rank was in Cluster 4 (180.08), and the highest average rank was in Cluster 1 (344.14). Consequently, representatives of different clusters can be identified as having different characteristics of hardiness, which indirectly confirms their ability or inability to cope with stress in the sociocultural context of SMO. Furthermore, in Clusters 1 and 3 hardiness is higher; hardiness is the lowest in Cluster 4.

Then the perception of the sociocultural context of SMO as extreme by respondents from all four clusters was analyzed, allowing statistically significant differences in almost all assessment parameters to be established (Table 4).

Table 4

Differences in the severity of the perception of SMO as an extreme socio-cultural context among respondents with different types of coping behavior (clusters)

	Mean (m)	Standard deviation (sd)	Fisher criterion (F)	Significance level (p)
		Immorality/humanity of the event		
Cluster 1	25,67	7,94		
Cluster 2	23,89	7,94		
			3,51	0,02
Cluster 3	24,03	8,05		
Cluster 4	27,02	8,01		

	Mean (m)	Standard deviation (sd)	Fisher criterion (F)	Significance level (p)
		Psychological proximity/remoteness		
Cluster 1	13,14	3,33		
Cluster 2	12,52	3,60		
			2,72	0,04
Cluster 3	12,03	3,88		
Cluster 4	12,78	3,25		
		Scope of the event		
Cluster 1	27,01	4,82		
Cluster 2	26,22	4,82		
			4,84	0,000
Cluster 3	25,41	5,09		
Cluster 4	21,98	5,52		

	Mean (m)	Standard deviation (sd)	Fisher criterion (F)	Significance level (p)
		Non-extremality/extremality of the event		
Cluster 1	19,86	4,21		
Cluster 2	20,18	4,05		
			3,78	0,01
Cluster 3	19,14	4,49		
Cluster 4	18,37	3,69		
		Negative/positive emotional context		
Cluster 1	21,03	9,46		
Cluster 2	18,88	9,47		
			5,51	0,001
Cluster 3	19,61	10,23		
Cluster 4	24,44	9,75		
		Long/short duration of the event		
Cluster 1	10,94	2,62		
Cluster 2	10,83	2,55		
			2,94	0,03
Cluster 3	10,58	2,77		
Cluster 4	9,79	2,83		

	Mean (m)	Standard deviation (sd)	Fisher criterion (F)	Significance level (p)
		Uncertainty/certainty of the event		
Cluster 1	8,66	3,05		
Cluster 2	7,48	3,05		
			8,52	0,00
Cluster 3	7,06	2,99		
Cluster 4	7,59	2,51		

In the perception of SMO as an extreme socio-cultural context among young people, differences were found in seven assessment parameters of the eight proposed. The "subjective significance" parameter was separately analyzed for differences ($\chi 2 = 12.69$ $p \leq 0.01$) using the Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric test because the distributions of clusters were not homogeneous. The respondents of the fourth cluster attach the least subjective importance to the situation of the SMO, find no personal meaning in it (average rank = 240); the respondents of the first cluster attach the greatest subjective importance to it (average rank = 325).

We should note that the representatives of all clusters have indicated humanity in the current situation. At the same time, respondents from different groups differ not only in the constellations of coping strategies, their intensity, but also in perceptions of SMO as a socio-cultural context. For respondents from Cluster 4, the socio-cultural context appears as a non-extreme event with a rich positive background, short-term, small-scale, not filled with personal meaning. Respondents from Cluster 1 perceive the SMO context as specific, long-term, large-scale, feel psychological commitment, participation in it, and therefore accept the situation and try to adapt to life in new conditions. The greatest distance and non-obviousness are typical for the respondents in Cluster 3. Respondents in Cluster 2 considered the event to be extreme. The negative emotional context of the event experience is characteristic of them.

When analyzing the perception of military threat by respondents in different clusters, a nonparametric Kruskal Wallis test was also used, allowing differences in all

four parameters to be established: anticipation of war ($\chi 2 = 42.05$ $p \leq 0.000$), military anxiety ($\chi 2 = 49.77$ $p \leq 0.000$), anticipatory adaptation for war ($\chi 2 = 89.17$ $p \leq 0.000$), and experience of a military threat ($\chi 2 = 83.74$ $p \leq 0.000$). All characteristics are more intensive in Cluster 4, which is characterized by the intensity of the entire set of coping strategies, and are less intensive in Cluster 3, with a moderate intensity of coping strategies.

Subsequently, content analysis of responses to open-ended interview questions focused on a subjective assessment of the consequences of the SMO by representatives of the four clusters was carried out. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Results of content analysis of interviews with respondents with different types of coping behavior (clusters)

Categories of analysis	Cluster 1 (n = 159)	Cluster 2 (n = 193)	Cluster 3 (n = 172)	Cluster 4 (n = 59)	Indicators (% of the total number of indicators; amount = 627)
Socio-economic difficulties	8,2%	14,5%*	12,8%	32,2%**	13,1%
Consequences for mental and emotional health	27,8%	38,3%*	27,3%	64,4%**	32,5%
Losses	3,8%	4,1%	7%	22%**	6,2%
Injuries in loved ones	0,6%	2,1%	2,3%	0%	1,4%
Rethinking reality and values, values of family and life	8,2%	5,7%	2,9%	32,2%**	7,7%
Uniting under the flag	1,3%	2,1%	1,2%	5,1%	1,8%
Concern for the safety of loved ones who are involved in SMO	12%*	6,7%	9,3%	27,1%**	10,2%

Categories of analysis	Cluster 1 (n = 159)	Cluster 2 (n = 193)	Cluster 3 (n = 172)	Cluster 4 (n = 59)	Indicators (% of the total number of indicators; amount = 627)
Breaking up close relationships	8,8%	3,1%	2,1%	6,8%	4,2%
A "negative" generalized answer	12,6%	11,9%	16,9%	39%**	15,2%
Couldn't answer	0%	1%	2,9%	8,5%	1,9%
Ambivalent	0,6%	1%	0,6%	3,4%	1%
Did not affect	4,4%	3,6%	4,1%	13,6%	4,6%
Positive	1,9%	0%	0%	0%	0,5%

***Notes**: * – differences with other clusters by Fisher criterion (ϕ) at the p < 0.05 significance level; ** – differences with other clusters by Fisher criterion (ϕ) at the p < 0.01 significance level*

According to respondents, the most important subjective consequences of the special military operation are negative changes in the psycho-emotional state (32.5% of the total number of indicators). The prevalence of this category in Cluster 4 is consistent with the intensity of all coping strategies, indicating high stress and relatively non-adaptive behavior of these respondents in the context of pronounced stress symptoms. Respondents also identified socio-economic consequences as subjectively significant (13.1% of indicators), "concern for loved ones who are in the SMO zone, live in the border areas" (10.2% of indicators), rethinking the values of family, life, loss, trauma in relatives and loved ones, breakdown of close relationships, conflicts within the family, divided by values and attitudes towards the SMO. It is necessary to highlight the significant differences in the Fisher criterion for the respondents of Cluster 4 from the respondents of all other clusters in categories such as "Socio-economic difficulties", "Consequences

for mental and emotional health", "Losses", "Concern for the safety of loved ones who are involved in the SMO", "Rethinking reality and values, values of family and life", and "A "negative" generalized answer". These results indicate acute stress and confirm previous data on the high intensity of all coping strategies and the vulnerability of respondents. We should also note the difference between Cluster 2 and Cluster 1 in the categories of "Socio-economic difficulties" and "Consequences for mental and emotional health", which also emphasizes the stress of the context for Cluster 2 respondents and specifies the stress factors with which they actively cope.

Discussion

Analysis of the results obtained for the entire sample shows a relatively intensive coping in young people, despite the stressful context of the modern historical period. The most intensive strategy is "Denial", which in an incontrollable context that depends little on the will of a particular subject can be a resource saving strategy that allows to accept reality and continue to live in a routine rhythm and format of functioning. At the same time, the ranking of coping strategies demonstrates the prevalence of the strategies of "Acceptance" (R1), "Self-distraction" (R2) and "Emotional support seeking" (R3). Denial of stress is accompanied by attempts to accept reality and move to the positive and important aspects of life, including close relationships. They become a source of emotional support, and according to global research, they are a buffer when experiencing a traumatic experience (Crișan et al., 2023; Middendorf, 2024). When comparing the severity of coping strategies according to the proximity/remoteness of residence to the military conflict zone, it was found that those living in the areas proximate to military operations (Circle 1 - LPR, DPR) rely significantly more on "Psychoactive substance use" and "Denial". They are to a lesser extent characterized by "Planning" and "Accepting" the situation. Therefore, despite the prolonged situation, young people living in these areas still have difficulty showing constructive activity, feeling control of the situation, and using cognitively more complex coping strategies. Perhaps this is due to a relative lack of resources. Residents of border territories (Belgorod, Voronezh) have a significantly higher level of "Challenge" strategy and use "Self-accusation" to a lesser extent. Currently, it is for them that the situation is associated with acute stress. At this stage, risk acceptance enables them to solve daily problems, continue to work and study in these areas, which pose a threat to their lives and the lives of their loved ones. The denial of responsibility for what is happening gives them strength and confidence. Residents of the remotest regions (Circle 3) more often use the "Instrumental support seeking" strategy, which is expressed mainly in search for information, answers to the questions that arise. These respondents are in a situation of information/mental war and receive information about what is happening exclusively through communication channels and the media. The lack and inconsistency of content with the impossibility to see everything with your own eyes requires information search.

Furthermore, in order to determine the combinations of coping strategies, regardless of the "circles of proximity" to the SMO zone, four clusters were identified in the total sample of respondents, reflecting different types of coherence and intensity of the coping strategies of the respondents. Cluster 1 represents respondents choosing conditionally adaptive coping (n = 159). These respondents use such strategies as Self-Distraction, Positive Reappraisal, Planning, and Acceptance. They focus on building their own lives and solving current and strategic development tasks in a new sociocultural context; a high adaptive potential is typical of them. Conditionally passive strategies such as Denial, Psychoactive Substance Use, Avoidance, Humor, and Self-Accusation are not typical of them.

Cluster 2 respondents (most numerous) are characterized by coping focused more on the expression of emotions (n = 193). The most intensive strategies in this cluster are Self-Distraction, Emotional Support Seeking, Instrumental Support Seeking, Emotional Outburst, Planning, and Acceptance, while the least intensive strategy is Psychoactive Substance Use. Respondents in this case primarily need emotional and instrumental support that enables them to obtain an external resource and adapt to the situation. This is consistent with research in the field of intimate relationships (Ozbay et al., 2007; Kryukova et al., 2019), which shows that people who are socially integrated and maintain relationships with others have better mental health, a higher level of subjective well-being and a lower rate of stress sensitivity. The perceived social and emotional support is a powerful resource for stress resistance, neutralizing environmental vulnerability.

Cluster 3 respondents (n = 172) were assigned to the group of "conditionally calm responses to the life context". They focus on Self-Distraction and Acceptance (medium level of severity). Their strategies are not intensive, indicating a low level of perceived stress in the SMO context.

Among Cluster 4 respondents (n = 59), absolutely all coping strategies were highly intensive, indicating a high intensity of experienced stress and active attempts to respond to it, adapting to the current situation by all means, including the use of psychoactive substances. In this group, the number of respondents from the first circle of proximity is significantly higher (over 60 %). The comparison of all groups by the hardiness parameters showed the greatest vulnerability of the representatives of this fourth group. They have the lowest level of hardiness and the "Control" parameter. Due to their own vulnerability in this socio-cultural context, they suffer stress effects that exceed their adaptation abilities, making their coping strategies excessively intensive. At the same time, they are aware of the lack of control over the current situation, which leads to even higher levels of stress and leads them into a cognitive and emotional trap.

Commitment and Challenge as hardiness parameters are more characteristic of respondents in Clusters 1 and Clusters 3, and Control – of Cluster 1 representatives. These respondents felt control of the situation because of their own active participation in the situation, which speaks of their adaptability potential.

In the moral assessment of the perception of the sociocultural context, representatives of all clusters note the humanity of the current situation, but representatives of Cluster 4 assess it as the most humane. At the same time, they place the least subjective importance on the situation of the SMO, find no personal significance in it, consider the situation to be of a smaller scope, short-term and not extreme. Such an ambivalent, perhaps superficial attitude to what is happening can be compensatory. However, the lack of a value basis in assessing the context can be associated with a low level of stress resistance, reducing adaptive potential, complicating the search for the most effective strategies, leading to the spread of strategies and cognitive distortions of reality.

The greatest psychological proximity to the SMO situation, as well as the certainty, subjective duration and importance of this situation, were noted by Cluster 1 representatives who accepted and adjusted to this socio-cultural context. Respondents from Cluster 3 point out the greatest psychological remoteness and non-obviousness of the situation, which allows them not to feel the stress of the context, which explains that coping strategies are intensive.

The greatest extremeness of the event and the negative emotional background prevail in the assessment of the representatives of Cluster 2. In this case, this explains the emotion-oriented response of respondents from Cluster 2 and the desire to seek support.

The results obtained are consistent with those obtained in the analysis of the perception of the military threat by respondents from different clusters. All characteristics are higher in Cluster 4, characterized by the tension of the entire set of coping strategies, and they are least intensely expressed in Cluster 3, with a moderate intensity of coping strategies.

To identify the substantive characteristics of perception of the situation of military threat in terms of giving personal meaning and emphasizing the consequences, a comparative analysis of the content analysis categories identified on the basis of the answers of respondents to open-ended questions was carried out.

The most subjectively significant consequences of the special military operation, the respondents found, were the negative changes in the psychological and emotional state (32.5 % of the total number of indicators). The most frequently occurring indicators in this category are stress, anxiety, fear (including fear of loud sounds, the future, fear for life, fear for loved ones), uncertainty about the future, worry, depression, negative/arduous emotional context, depression, apathy, tension, mental pressure, etc. Respondents from Cluster 4 and Cluster 2 describe this especially vividly: "I am drowning in anxiety"; "I am scared to live"; "It is psychologically difficult to endure"; "It is emotionally difficult to realize that loved ones and friends are someone's target"; "You react with horror when the danger of a drone attack catches your family"; "It has become more difficult psychologically"; "I have become more anxious, there is a lot of fear, I often feel apathy and depression, negative thoughts in my head, at times it is more difficult to focus on the matter"; "Anxiety, misunderstanding of the future, stress";

"It is emotionally difficult to watch the events taking place"; "Depression, exhaustion, and depletion"; "Insomnia, constant worries about my life and the lives of others"; "The emotional state of the whole family changes rapidly", etc. These data are consistent with global studies of the impact of military conflicts on human psycho-emotional health. The psycho-traumatic experience of both participants and witnesses to war is often associated with long-term destructive consequences for the individual. War stress and future shock, accompanied by high levels of anxiety, have a disorganized effect on a person at all levels of organization – sensory, cognitive, behavioral, ideological – and affect personal identity (Rozanov et al., 2019). At the same time, scientists point out that the symptoms associated with post-traumatic experiences can persist for many years, but only the intensity of manifestation decreases as long as a person finds himself in favourable conditions (Qi, Gevonden & Shalev, 2016). The significant prevalence of this category in Cluster 4 is consistent with the intensity of all coping strategies, indicating a high stress load and relatively non-adaptive behavior of these respondents in the context of serious stress symptoms. It should be noted that in Cluster 2, despite the fact that the number of semantic indicators is lower than in Cluster 4, respondents describe their emotional state in greater detail using many epithets and metaphors, explaining the reasons and predicting the consequences, which is also consistent with the prevalence of emotion-oriented coping strategies in this group.

Further, respondents identified socio-economic consequences as subjectively significant (13.1 % of indicators). These included rising prices and economic instability ("It affects the daily level: in rising prices"; "Apartments and cars are unattainable goods, the price of basic foods has increased"), a decline in the standard of living in general ("Economic decline"; "Economic crisis"; "Instability, less stability, and sanctions"), restrictions on freedom of movement and alienation ("The inability to move freely around the world, outside of Russia"; "Isolation from the world"), restrictions in the scope of opportunities, militarization of society, prohibition of discussing certain topics ("Censorship"; "A gap in society at the level of opinions, the inability to discuss"; "Many laws and legal precedents have emerged, and some acts have received a second meaning and are now unacceptable"), and a decline in the birth rate. Respondents in Cluster 1 noted this range of consequences to a lesser extent. Their answers in this category are generalized, without any connection with specific changes at the individual level. This category of analysis also dominates most in Cluster 4 of respondents.

The category "Concern for the safety of loved ones who are involved in the SMO, living on the border" (10.2 % of the indicators) should be referred to separately. Respondents noted that concerns for the safety of loved ones had influenced the psychological state of the family, changed its functioning: "My close relatives participate in the SMO, which to some extent affects every family member"; "Fear has emerged for some family members and for the young man"; "Family members are concerned about a relative in the SMO and wonder if he calls or writes"; "We can't think of anything else"; "Some of my friends are from Belgorod, where periodic shelling occurs, I am

concerned" ... We should note that respondents often view family anxiety as a resource for bringing together the family, mutual support and integrated efforts. Thus, the category "Rethinking the values of family and life" dominates considerably in Cluster 4 (32.2 %). Under the high stress load, unification and reassessment of the importance of the family increase the individual's adaptive potential. Global studies emphasize that there is often a demonstration of a stronger identification with society, increased patriotism, positive changes in family relationships (Nestik, 2023), focusing on the psychotherapeutic function of the family and the exceptional importance of the support of relatives and social support in general (Feeney & Collins, 2015). At the same time, focusing on support suggests that a person is aware of the lack of his own resources and has some difficulties in taking personal responsibility and taking decisions related to his life under these circumstances.

Among the consequences of SMO were also identified losses, injuries to relatives and close persons, breakdown of close relationships, family conflicts based on values and attitudes towards the SMO.

Conclusion

The study enables us to make some generalizations. Despite the geographical proximity/remoteness of the military conflict ("proximity circles"), the special military operation is perceived and evaluated by young people as an extreme psychotraumatic life context associated with deterioration of psycho-emotional state, high stress loads, value conflicts, increasing concerns about the safety of loved ones, experiencing loss of stability in life, and socio-economic difficulties. At the same time, there is a rethinking of real values, reappraisal of life importance, and resourcefulness of close relationships and family. There is a subjective assessment of the importance of the delayed consequences of this life context.

In general, young people are sufficiently adapted to this situation, as indirectly demonstrated by a variety of coping behaviors and average hardiness indicators. We should note that the characteristics of coping are related to proximity/remoteness to military operations. Therefore, young people in Circle 1 (residents of the LPR, DPR) rely much more on the use of psychoactive substances and deny the high stress of the SMO situation; they do not use the Planning and Acceptance strategies. Circle 2 respondents (residents of the border regions – Belgorod, Voronezh) more often use the Challenge strategy in the absence of the Self-Accusation strategy. Circle 3 respondents (Central Federal District and Khabarovsk Krai) more often use the Instrumental Support Seeking strategy. However, despite the obvious differences, the Denial coping strategy (in combination with a positive reappraisal of the situation and participation in close relationships) is the most intensive of the whole sample, which can be a resource-saving strategy to maintain normal lifestyle and perform important functions.

This study has enabled us to identify and describe four major types of coherence and intensity of coping behavior among Russian young people, including Type 1 (active, accepting, adaptive coping), Type 2 (passive, emotional, adaptive, social support seeking), Type 3 (passive, accepting, adaptive), and Type 4 (active, undifferentiated, non-adaptive).

Respondents of all types have differences in hardiness parameters. Type 1 respondents achieved the highest results, indicating the importance of accepting the situation of a military conflict as a condition for a modern person's life, involvement, planning and control of events in his/her life. At the same time, the greater the underestimation of the importance and inevitability of what is happening, the denial and subjective isolation, the greater the stress load and the risk of psychological trauma.

Limitations

Of course, this study has its limitations, one of which is that internal migration has not been taken into account. Therefore, respondents who initially lived in the front or border areas of the Russian Federation may have entered several "proximity circles". Perhaps, this is why we failed to identify significant differences in the perception and assessment of the military conflict situation.

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Anna Gennad'evna Samokhvalova developed the research concept, collected the data, and reviewed relevant Russian-language literature.

Elena Viktorovna Tikhomirova reviewed relevant global literature, developed the research methodology, performed primary data analysis, analyzed the qualitative data using content analysis, and interpreted the results.

Ol'ga Aleksandrovna Ekimchik collected the data, performed statistical analysis of the results, and discussed the results.

Mariya Vyacheslavovna Saporovskaya developed the research concept, summarized the results, and formulated conclusions.

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Conflict of Interest Information

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