



Personal Determinants of Perception of Adverse Life Situations and Choice of Coping Strategies

Annenkova E.A.

The article is a brief review of correlation analysis revealing influence of hardiness, locus of control, and self-regulation attributes of male and female students upon their perception of adverse life situations and choice of coping strategies.

Key words: *coping strategies, adverse life situations, hardiness, locus of control, self-regulation.*

As a rule, investigation of influence of personal attributes on coping behavior doesn't consider personal perception of situations to be coped with. Meanwhile it can be assumed that choice of coping strategy to a great extent is determined by how stressful the situation is in the eyes of the individual supposed to cope with it.

So, the goal of our research was to investigate the relation of personal attributes of students both to their perception of adverse life situations and the preferred coping strategies.

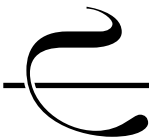
We chose hardiness, locus of control, and self-regulation attributes as personal determinants of coping behavior. Leontyev D.A. and Rasskazova E.I. in their research revealed that hardiness helps individuals master adverse life situations keeping inner balance [2]. Influence of locus of control upon coping styles was revealed both by foreign and Russian psychologists, for instance by Kryukova T.L. [1]; however their data is conflicting. Importance of self-regulation for success in different activities was proved by Morosanova V.I. [3], but relation of self-regulation to coping strategies was not investigated.

For assessment of subjective perception of adverse life situations we applied the procedure "Adverse Life Situations" of Shkuratova I.P. To define coping styles we used "CISS: Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations" by Endler N.S. and Parker J.D.A.

For assessment of personal attributes of students we used hardiness test of Maddi S.R. translated and adapted by Leontyev D.A. and Rasskazova E.I. [2], procedure "Self-Regulating Styles" of Morosanova V.I. [3], and "Subjective Ego-Control Scale Questionnaire" of Bazhin E.F., Golyunkina E.A., and Etkind A.M. To reveal correlation between the reviewed attributes Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was applied.

Experimental group included 102 third-grade students (equally split between males and females) aged 19-20 years.

Procedure "Self-Regulating Styles" allows assessment of stress impact of 30 adverse life situations in four dimensions: relations, business, extreme and criminal events, and passing of the loved ones. These situations split into two groups by changeability. Changeable events imply possibility of person's condition recovery and positive solution of the problem. Unchangeable events imply irreversible change of person's condition and life.



All students in the experimental group perceive passing of the loved ones as the most stressful life situation. Second most stressful situation is unchangeable break with lover or best friend of same gender. Changeable relation problems (quarrel with the loved ones), extreme situations and stressful business events are on the third position among most stressful situations. Unchangeable events are harder for young people to deal with in comparison to changeable events of the same dimension.

Analysis of correlation between stressfulness perception of adverse situations in different dimensions and hardiness reveals inverse relationship between the said factors; in other words, students high in hardiness perceive adverse situations as less stressful. Ego-control has the strongest relation to stressfulness perception of adverse situations. Risk acceptance as hardiness attribute also contributes to optimistic approach to adverse life situations.

Self-esteem helps to master stressful situations in the dimension of relations ($r = -0.26$ with $p \leq 0.01$), and in the dimension of extreme and criminal events both changeable ($r = -0.20$ with $p \leq 0.05$) and unchangeable ($r = -0.24$ with $p \leq 0.05$).

High internal locus of control is related to perception of changeable extreme situations as less stressful ($r = -0.29$ with $p \leq 0.01$); same is true for unchangeable business-related events ($r = -0.20$ with $p \leq 0.05$).

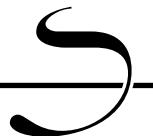
Self-regulation attributes also correlated with stressfulness perception of adverse situations in different dimensions. Students with advanced planning ability master passing of the loved ones easier ($r = -0.28$ with $p \leq 0.05$). Flexible self-regulation allows easier coping with changeable ($r = -0.27$ with $p \leq 0.05$) and unchangeable ($r = -0.20$ with $p \leq 0.05$) stressful situations in relations.

Thus, we can conclude that hardiness, internal locus of control, and advanced self-regulation are factors providing perception of adverse life situations as less stressful.

Application of Endler & Parker's CISS analysis of coping styles' choice showed that both male and female students prefer task-oriented coping. Second most frequent coping style is avoidant-distracting. Emotion-oriented coping behavior which serves to reduce stress in the face of adversity by means of intra-psycho processes is practiced by girls as frequent as avoidant-distracting strategy; meanwhile boys use this strategy much rarer. Emotion-oriented coping style is demonstrated by girls credibly more frequently than by boys.

Analysis of relation of personal attributes to coping strategies revealed that choice of task-oriented coping style is supported by such hardiness attributes as involvement ($r = 0.31$ with $p \leq 0.01$) and control ($r = 0.34$ with $p \leq 0.01$). General internal locus of control ($r = 0.27$ with $p \leq 0.05$), as well as internality in achievements ($r = 0.33$ with $p \leq 0.01$), relations ($r = 0.33$ with $p \leq 0.01$) and health care ($r = 0.22$ with $p \leq 0.05$) have instant dependence on choice of task-oriented coping behavior style. Advanced planning as self-regulation attribute also contributes to the choice of task-oriented coping strategy ($r = 0.20$ with $p \leq 0.05$).

Emotion-oriented coping strategies are preferred by students low in all hardiness attributes, low general internal locus of control ($r = -0.26$ with $p \leq 0.05$), and low inter-



nality in achievements ($r = -0.20$ with $p \leq 0.05$), as well as also poor modeling ability ($r = -0.31$ with $p \leq 0.01$) and low flexibility of self-regulation ($r = -0.22$ with $p \leq 0.01$).

Avoidant-social coping strategies are practiced by students high in involvement ($r = 0.28$ with $p \leq 0.05$), high general internality ($r = 0.22$ with $p \leq 0.05$), and highly flexible self-regulation ($r = 0.27$ with $p \leq 0.05$). It follows thence, that students high in hardiness prefer task-oriented and avoidant-social coping strategies, while students low in hardiness plunge into emotions when facing stressful life situations. Students with internal locus of control choose task-oriented coping styles while students with external locus of control – emotion-oriented behavior strategies. Thus, the reviewed personal determinants do influence both perception of adverse life situations and choice of coping behavior styles.

The Literature

1. Kryukova T.L. Psychology of Coping Behavior. – Kostroma: Small Printer Studio "Avantitul", 2004. – 344 p.
2. Leontyev D.A., Rasskazova E.I. Hardiness Test. – Moscow: Publishing House "Smysl", 2006. – 63 p.
3. Morosanova V.I. Individual Self-Regulation Patterns. – Moscow: Publishing House "Nauka", 1998. – 192 p.