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**COPING BEHAVIOR OF YOUNG PEOPLE AMID ECONOMIC STRESS**

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**Abstract**

The article analyses coping behavior of young people in the situation of unemployment caused by the economic crisis. 252 people (aged from 23 to 36 years) were interviewed, the respondents were divided into 2 groups: group 1 – 126 people unemployed for 3-4 months; group 2 – 126 people unemployed for more than 1 year. The study involved 120 men and 132 women from Vladikavkaz, Republic of North Ossetia-Alania. It has been revealed that among young people with more than 1 year of unemployment experience, a negative emotional background dominates. The higher the length of unemployment, the higher the propensity for chaotic job search among the respondents is. Among young people with a low experience of unemployment, responsibility for their families is not yet prevailing, and they are more relaxed about their life situation and the search for a way out. The analysis has determined that the ways the unemployed people with different experience of unemployment use to overcome economic stress differ significantly in terms of the parameters of a considered search, expansion of social ties, assistance from relatives, an indicator of mental stress and insecurity. In other words, unemployed people with different experience of unemployment organize their activity in a crisis situation on the labor market in completely different ways.

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*Keywords:* Youth, coping behavior, economic stress, unemployment



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## 1. Introduction

Today, objective external reality imposes high requirements to the individual due to the high pace of life and the presence of stress in various spheres of life: professional, personal, economic, etc. At the same time, the physiological and psychological stress of a person increases. The increased urgency of the issue of protecting a person against adverse environmental factors can be considered a prerequisite for the emergence and widespread educating under stress. Stress causes most diseases. However, despite the negative aspect, stress is the most important tool for training and tempering the personality as it helps to boost stamina, train forbidden mechanisms. Stress is an ally in the body's continuous adaptation to any changes in our environment.

Economic stress causes changes in the physiological reactions of the body in the individual and these changes may not go beyond normal states, and in some cases become quite strong. Therefore, the correct understanding of the positive and negative aspects of stress, their adequate use or prevention play an important role in maintaining human health, creating conditions for demonstrating creative abilities fruitful and effective activity in everyday life and work calls for familiarizing a wide range of people with various aspects of stress (Blaser et al., 1998).

Economic stress is commonly understood as a rapid deterioration in the individual's financial situation, which lasts for a certain time. Those experiencing economic stress primarily include unemployed people, women on parental leave and retirees.

Unemployment is interpreted as a socio-economic phenomenon of society, in which work of a certain part of the able-bodied population is not applicable; people have no opportunity to get a job. Majorly unemployment is caused by the excess of the number of those wishing to get a job over the number of available jobs. The historical experience of human development indicates that in countries with a market economy system, there is almost always a certain proportion of the unemployed. It is generally accepted that an unemployment rate of 1 to 3% is quite acceptable, with an unemployment rate of 5% the economy is able to exist, but 7% and more is a socially dangerous level, which is desirable to avoid (Demin, 2004).

The main indicators of unemployment are its level and duration. The unemployment rate is measured as the ratio of the officially registered unemployed to the general number of employed people. The duration of unemployment characterizes the average time of production disruption (Kryukova, 2015).

In the Western economy, there are 5 main directions that explain the causes of unemployment:

1. rigidity of the labor market determined by the characteristics of the labor force and the product;

2. low demand for labor;

3. accumulation of capital, leading to an increase in the technical equipment of the means of production;

4. consequence of the excess of wages;

5. decrease in demand for labor.

It is customary to distinguish the following forms of unemployment:

1) Frictional unemployment reflects staff turnover, which is closely related to the change in jobs and/or place of residence for the period of introduction of new technological advances. This movement of labor to new jobs is becoming not only inevitable but also more intense. The means of reducing this form

of unemployment is to increase information services being the actual presentation of information on vacancies availability; creation of special bodies for television and printing to accelerate the ability to receive diverse information.

2) Structural unemployment occurs when the country undergoes global restructuring, the relationship between industries changes, which leads to the increase of labor turnover due to new proportions created in the intersectoral distribution of jobs. The above-mentioned type of unemployment arises in the process of mismatching supply and demand for qualifications and specialties due to the underdevelopment of the qualification and educational system of labor resources. Structural unemployment is a severe form of unemployment, since the costs of its elimination, i.e. the costs of retraining people, creating institutions to improve or change qualifications, as well as changing the education itself, are very high.

3) Institutional unemployment occurs when the labor market as an enterprise is not productive enough. Not entirely complete information about job vacancies is possible. The unemployment rate could be lower if the information system worked well. In the same direction, there is an overestimated social benefit for unemployment or reduced taxes on income. In such a case, the duration of unemployment increases, as the incentives for active job searches are reduced.

4) Cyclical unemployment causes a decline in production during an industrial crisis and depression. With a gradual transition to an upsurge and development of production, the number of unemployed usually decreases.

5) Voluntary unemployment arises in any society where people who due to their mental makeup or for any other reason do not want to work are divided into layers.

6) Hidden unemployment is a form of unemployment in which people are employed part-time or are on forced leave. As a rule, this type of unemployment affects the owners of small businesses who receive income below the average wage. They are ready to close for business at any time. Hidden unemployment is especially characteristic of rural areas: half-ruined farmers are formally considered independent owners but in fact they are unemployed.

7) Long-term unemployment regards people working at home rather than in production. Employees of such a home system are generally fully employed during the specified periods of the calendar year, while the rest of the time they are unemployed. This category of unemployed is also constituted by such a stagnant surplus population, which is formed by people excluded from production and permanently deprived of the opportunity to return to it (Demin, 2004).

Summarizing the above, one of the important causes of economic stress is job loss or long-term unemployment. There are a lot of types, reasons for the occurrence and methods of the course of unemployment. However, the permissible unemployment rate for economically developed countries varies from 3 to 5%.

## 2. Problem Statement

In the process of coping with a stressful situation, each specific individual applies personal strategies, which are commonly called coping strategies. On their basis, the individual's personal experience and psychological reserve called a coping resource are formed (Vitaliano et al., 1990). Coping

strategies are understood as purposeful behavior associated with overcoming a perceived threat. In other words, coping strategies are a kind of stressor management method. In modern psychology, there are many different approaches to the typology of coping strategies (Gurieva & Afanasyeva, 2020).

Foreign researcher E. Heim grouped coping strategies in accordance with three basic spheres of a person's mental activity: cognitive, emotional and behavioral.

They classified the following as cognitive coping strategies:

- 1) Transfer or refocusing thoughts on other spheres of the individual's life;
- 2) Agreement with the current problematic situation, its complete acceptance as something inevitable;
- 3) Ignoring the difficult situation that has arisen, its neglect, a kind of decrease in the level of the problem's severity, often making fun of it;
- 4) Ability to hide adverse state and excitement from the people around;
- 5) A deep analysis of the problem situation and its various consequences, which includes the search for the necessary information, reflection, a rationalized approach to solving difficulties;
- 6) Ambiguous nature of the problem assessment, frequent comparison of oneself with all kinds of people who are in even more difficult circumstances;
- 7) Religiousness and persistent, long-term conversion to faith;
- 8) Introducing ambiguous meaning into a stressful situation, treating difficulties as a test of fortitude or a destiny challenge.
- 9) Self-esteem, which reflects a deeper awareness of the importance and significance of one's own personality.

Emotional coping strategies can have the following forms:

- 1) Various emotional experiences of dissatisfaction, objections, opposition to the problem itself and its consequences;
- 2) Emotional release in the form of tears or loud laughter;
- 3) Isolation and suppression of feelings and emotions, unwillingness to express them;
- 4) Passive cooperation involving trust and complete transfer of responsibility to other people, for example, parents, psychotherapist, spouses;
- 5) Retreat, denial, escape;
- 6) Tendency to self-accusation and taking the fall;
- 7) Excitement, feeling of anger, irritation associated with the limitations of life caused by the current problem;
- 8) Keeping calm, equanimity, self-control.

Behavioral coping strategies include the following:

- 1) Concentration on a certain professional type of activity, withdrawal to work, denial;
- 2) Unconditional concern for other people, while often personal needs and problems are faded into the background, altruism;
- 3) Enterprising avoidance of the current problem situation;
- 4) Distracting activities aimed to achieve goals and desires, pronounced compensation;

5) Constructive activity, involving the implementation of a long-planned desire or need (for example, making a long trip)

6) Staying in a state of solitude, thinking over life;

7) Cooperation and taking full responsibility for the possible results and consequences of the problem;

8) Desire and inclination to be understood and listened to, find assistance and support, constant search for emotional support (Moos & Schaefer, 1984).

E. Heim also divided coping strategies according to the degree of their adaptive capabilities into the following groups:

- productive, which include prompt help and active coping with a stressful situation,
- relatively productive, which support in situations that are not significant for the individual in which the degree of stress is regarded as small,
- unproductive, which do not reduce stress levels and on the contrary contribute to its increase (as cited in Zeidner & Hammer, 1990).

The most popular group of coping strategies classifications in psychology is built on the foundation of two basic styles that were identified by Lazarus et al. (2000):

1. Problem-oriented type of coping-strategies imply that an individual considers what happened and refers to the people around him for support looking for additional information, social assistance and instrumental support.

2. The emotionally oriented type of coping strategies consists in the full expression of internal feelings and experiences, active emotional response, full immersion of a person in their feelings, a tendency to self-blame and involvement of others in personal experiences.

### **3. Research Questions**

The subject of the research was the phenomenon of coping strategies amidst unemployment.

The object of the research was unemployed youth with different unemployment experience.

The respondents were divided into 2 groups:

group 1 – 126 people unemployed for 3-4 months;

group 2 – 126 people unemployed for more than 1 year.

The age of the subjects was from 23 to 36 years old. The study involved 120 men and 132 women.

The study was conducted in Vladikavkaz, Republic of North Ossetia-Alania.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The study aimed to consider the ways to overcome economic stress among unemployed people with different experience of unemployment.

The research tasks were as follows:

1. To carry out a theoretical analysis of the presented problem on the materials of domestic and foreign scientists;

2. To identify specific techniques for overcoming economic stress;

3. To study the groups of unemployed with different unemployment experience;
4. To analyze the ways of overcoming the economic stress among the unemployed with different experience of unemployment.

## 5. Research Methods

The research was carried out using the following set of empirical methods: the author's questionnaire aimed to establish the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents; methodology "Self-organization amidst unemployment" developed by Demin (2004).

The results of the study were subjected to mathematical processing using a computer program for statistical data processing "SPSS 13.0" and Excel. Among the methods of adequate statistics, the Mann-Whitney U-test was used.

## 6. Findings

According to the data obtained, there is a direct connection between the length of unemployment and the indicator "thoughtful job search".

Thus, there is a long and careful consideration of further actions for employment among the respondents with less experience of unemployment ( $U = 3.18$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ). They search for job in a more responsible and thoughtful way.

The general feature adherent to young people in this regard is openness to new experience. Thus, they are more focused on finding opportunities in a difficult life situation.

It has been found that the indicator "extension of social ties" ( $U = 1.98$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) is significantly higher among the unemployed with the unemployment experience of up to 3 months. Perhaps this indicates that the unemployed with a low record of unemployment aim at quick employment, for which diversity and expansion of social contacts can be useful.

They are more focused on communicating with the people around them, are open to establishing new social communications, strive to overcome the status of "unemployed" as soon as possible.

It has been determined that with an increase in the length of unemployment, the indicator "alternative activity" also increases.

Those unemployed for more than 1 year ( $U = 2.02$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) are characterized by a multivariate job search, which suggests that the higher the unemployment experience, the lower the respondents' desire to get a job in their specialty is.

As a rule, they tend to look for an alternative to the previously chosen specialty, and during this life period they can engage in retraining or the choice of another profession (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Reliable differences in overcoming economic crisis among the unemployed with different periods of unemployment

Ways to overcome economic crisis	Rate of the unemployed 3-4 months (n = 26)		Rate of the unemployed over 1 year (n = 26)	Significance level of differences
	Rate of the unemployed 3-4 months (n = 26)	Rate of the unemployed over 1 year (n = 26)		
Thoughtful job search	3.18	2.15	0.05	
Extending social ties	1.98	0.54	0.05	
Alternative activity	0.27	2.02	0.05	
Allowance orientation	2.61	3.75	0.05	
Tendency to chaotic search	1.18	2.78	0.01	
Availability of assistance from relatives	2.28	3.32	0.05	
Mental stress indicator	1.16	2.80	0.01	
Insecurity of the future	3.70	2.03	0.05	
Insecurity of the present	3.98	2.38	0.05	

Unemployed young people are practically not focused on receiving material benefits ( $U = 3.61$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ). Such results can be explained by the fact that young specialists in an individual employment crisis are more guarded by their social environment, which will include parents and close relatives. Perhaps this process is influenced by such a young age of the respondents. Most likely, young people have not yet completely disconnected from their parental family and the provision of assistance is viewed by others as not only personal but also social norm.

It has been revealed that the higher the length of unemployment, the higher the propensity for chaotic job search ( $U = 2.78$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) among the respondents is. The results obtained may indicate that among young people with a low experience of unemployment, responsibility for their families does not prevail, and they are more relaxed about their life situation and the search for a way out.

It was found that the indicator of mental stress increases with gaining unemployment experience ( $U = 2.80$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ). Thus, a negative emotional background dominates among young people being unemployed for more than 1 year, a decrease in mood is also observed; anxiety, tension, and unreasonable excitement are often felt. However, the indicator of the future ( $U = 3.70$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and present ( $U = 3.98$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) safety is higher among young people with little experience of unemployment, which indicates the confusion of unemployed youth and lack of confidence in the future.

The analysis enabled to establish that the methods of overcoming the economic crisis among young people with different experience of unemployment differ significantly in terms of the parameters of a well-thought-out job search, extension of social ties, availability of help from relatives, an indicator of mental tension and insecurity. In other words, unemployed people with different experience of unemployment organize their activity in a crisis situation on the labor market in completely different ways.

## 7. Conclusion

Economic stress is expressed in the material situation of unemployed people and their socio-psychological well-being. Therefore, the main task of social policy should be to forestall mass

unemployment, which is ensured by the normal functioning of social structures, and above all the economy and the social sphere.

Today in our country some measures to curb unemployment not only at the state level but also by the efforts of local authorities, heads of enterprises and institutions are being taken. Such forms of restraining unemployment as unpaid leave, financial assistance for the development of self-employment, and the establishment of quotas for the admission of certain categories of the population (youth, disabled people, etc.) at enterprises are practiced. It is very important to introduce preferential taxation and loans to enterprises that create additional jobs for women, youth and other categories of the population (Vasserman, 2010).

As a result of our research, it has been revealed that the indicator of mental tension rises and a tendency to chaotic job search arises with an increase in the length of unemployment among unemployed youth.

The use of the obtained data is possible for the development of methodological recommendations and practical exercises in the field of labor psychology and psychology of unemployment. The data obtained can be used to develop adequate and effective forms of social and psychological assistance and support the unemployed for their further employment.

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