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# COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES AND PECULIARITIES OF COPING BEHAVIOR: ETHNOPSYCHOLOGICAL AND GENDER ASPECTS

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### *Abstract*

The article contains results of the study devoted to social and psychological peculiarities of men and women’s coping behavior depending on their ethnic background. We performed comparative analysis of social and psychological differences in coping behavior. Selection of the study included 160 persons, aged from 25 to 55 years, average age equals  $M=33.5$ , living in the Republic of North Ossetia – Alania of the Russian Federation. The following methods and procedures were used in the study: author’s questionnaire for determination of social and demographic characteristics of the respondents, “Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations” questionnaire, COPE Questionnaire. The mathematical and statistical analysis of the obtained data included the following: Excel, “SPSS.13.0”, Student’s t-test. As a result, we learned that there are significant differences in the coping strategies preferred by men and women, as well as by the respondents of different ethnic backgrounds. These results may be used for arrangement of social and psychological services in multi-cultural and multi-confessional regions, as well as for development of stress psychology, personality psychology, ethnic psychology and developmental psychology.

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**Keywords:** Communications technologies, coping behavior, coping strategy, problem oriented coping, emotion-focused coping.



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## 1. Introduction

In modern science, we can see a large number of studies devoted to various psychological, ethnopsychological, physiological, social and medical aspect of coping behavior. The ways a person manages stressful situations are called coping strategies (or coping behaviour) (Gurieva, 2008; Vodopyanova, 2009). Based on the literature review, we may say that today there are more than 20 types of coping strategies. It is assumed that a coping strategy means use of various ways and methods aimed to cope with stressful situations (Gurieva, 2014; Lazarus, 2001). However, most classifications of coping behavior are based on two basic styles identified by foreign researchers Folkman and Lazarus (1986):

1) Problem-oriented style of coping behavior-the subject of coping with a stressful situation analyzes what happened, seeks help from others, seeks additional information (Perrez, 2001; Shek, 2002; Skinner, 2010). This style involves: a preliminary analysis of the problem, focusing on finding possible ways to solve it, the individual's awareness of their capabilities and characteristics of the situation, the choice of possible alternatives to the most acceptable model of behavior, appeal to their own experience of solving similar problems, practical implementation of plans (Lazarus, Kanner, & Folkman, 2000).

2) Emotionally-oriented style of coping behavior involves immersion in their own experiences, self-blame, involvement of others in personal experiences (Moos & Schaefer, 2001; Sek, 2000; Vitaliano, 2013). This style involves: internal aggression (anger at yourself, guilt); external aggression (anger at others, unmotivated breakdowns on loved ones); fixation on the experience of their helplessness, inability to cope with the situation; focusing on their own shortcomings; apathy or irritation at everything that happens; the experience of nervous tension, breakdowns; search for opportunities for emotional discharge (Vasserman, 2010).

It is considered that both styles of coping behavior are necessary for the individual and constructively the ability to apply each of them depending on the complexity of the situation, because they both contribute to the physical and mental health of the individual.

## 2. Problem Statement

The specific interest of most of the researchers is focused on coping behaviour of a person in the context of cultural variety. The study of ethnopsychological peculiarities of coping behaviour has a special topicality in the context of better understanding the ways of integral functioning of a person as an activity performer in the multicultural environment (Amirkhan, 2008; Blaser, Heim, Ringer, & Thommen, 1998; Zeindr, 2000).

## 3. Research Questions

Coping behaviour has different content depending not only on the ethnic group but also on the gender. The leading coping type is problem oriented coping. We may assume that emotional suppression; control over emotions and management of negative feelings connected with personal experience, belonging to the ethnic groups and gender. The research question tend to demonstrate the significant differences in coping behaviour of women depend on ethnic groups.

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

The purpose of the study is to compare cross-cultural peculiarities of coping behaviour demonstrated by the representatives of the Russian and the Ossetian ethnic groups. Based on this purpose, we have specified the following tasks: comparative analysis of ethnopsychological features of the Russian and Ossetian ethnic group's representatives' coping behaviour. As well as identification of differences in the coping strategies preferred by men and women.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The study was performed in Vladikavkaz, the Republic of North Ossetia – Alania, where the indigenous population are the Ossetians. The Russians, being an ethnic minority at this territory, make the united ethnic community and preserve their ethnic identity and specific features of natural culture. Representatives of the Russian ethnic group, living in the Republic, who participated in the study, are the Cossacks, who has been dwelling at this territory for about 500 years (41 persons) and the Russians who has mainly moved to this territory in the times of the Soviet Union (38 persons). Totally, the selection scoped 160 persons (92 women and 68 men) aged from 25 to 55 years. Subject to the personal ethnic self-identification, we inquired the following groups: representatives of the Ossetian ethnic group – 81 persons (32 men and 49 women); representatives of the Russian ethnic group – 79 persons (36 men and 43 women). Marital status of the respondents is as follows: 55 persons are single, 78 persons are married, 20 persons are divorced and 7 persons are widowed. Educational background of the respondents is as follows: 130 respondents have higher education, 6 persons have unfinished higher education and 24 persons have secondary professional education (training college or technical school).

The following set of empirical methods was used in the study: author's questionnaire for determination of social and demographic characteristics of the respondents, "Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations" questionnaire (developed by N. Endler and J. Parker, adapted by T. Kryukova) (Kryukova, 2015), COPE Questionnaire (developed by C. Carver, M. Scheier and J. Weintraub, adapted by T. Gordeeva, E. Osin, E. Rasskazova, O. Sychev & V. Shevyakhova) (Rasskazova, Gordeeva, & Osin, 2013). Excel and "SPSS.13.0" programs, as well as Student's t-test, were used for processing, and mathematical and statistical analysis of the of the study results.

#### **6. Findings**

According to the obtained data, representatives of the Russian ethnic group more frequently use the problem oriented coping ( $t=3.18$  at  $p\leq 0.01$ ) in problem situations. This type of coping includes high level of self-control and belief in own internal resources for overcoming hardships. The obtained data signify that control over emotions, self-restraint are natural for the Russians, and thorough planning of actions, and analysis of the encountered problem are prevailing. Thus, in stressful situations, the Russians are aimed at changing the problem conditions they face by searching useful information and performing active actions for their elimination (see Table 01.).

It is found that the Russians use the "active coping" strategy in conditions of life hardships more often than the Ossetians ( $t=2.50$  at  $p\leq 0.01$ ) by developing the systematic actions aimed at overcoming the

stressful situation. It is found that in the Russian selection the respondents more often use “seeking social support” strategy as a form of coping behavior ( $t=2.84$  at  $p\leq 0.01$ ). According to this strategy, an individual, in attempt to cope with the problem situations, tends to be in the public places more often than usual and make social contacts with other people.

As for the Ossetian selection, the emotion-focused coping was more frequently found ( $t=-1.98$  at  $p\leq 0.05$ ). Such coping behavior includes demonstration of own feelings and emotions caused by the unpleasant situation, as well as high indignation and rejection of hardships, hopelessness, anger, self-blaming, and blaming of others.

**Table 01.** Significant differences in coping behaviour of the Russians and the Ossetians

Coping strategies	Russians (n = 79)	Ossetians (n = 81)	Level of significant differences
Problem oriented coping	3.18	3.15	$p\leq 0.01$
Emotion-focused coping	-1.98	-1.94	$p\leq 0.05$
Avoidance coping	4.02	3.92	$p\leq 0.01$
Distracting	3.65	3.61	$p\leq 0.01$
Seeking social support	2.84	2.78	$p\leq 0.01$
Concentration on emotions and their release	-3.28	-3.32	$p\leq 0.01$
Active coping	2.50	2.46	$p\leq 0.01$

The representatives of the Ossetian ethnic group more frequently concentrate on their own emotions ( $t = -3.28$  at  $p\leq 0.01$ ), demonstrating focus on adverse and negative emotions, expression of personal emotional stress and own feelings in case of troubles. It was found that the representatives of the Ossetian selection frequently use “denial” as a stress coping behavior in critical situation ( $t=-3.70$  at  $p\leq 0.01$ ). This means that the Ossetians, more frequently than the Russians, do not want to believe in what happened and thus try to deny the reality in any possible way. In addition, it is natural for the representatives of the Ossetian ethnic group to use the “behavioral avoidance of the problem” strategy ( $t=-3.42$  at  $p\leq 0.01$ ) in conditions of life hardships. This strategy means abandonment of the desired purpose and impossibility to regulate efforts directed at cooperation with the stress.

By evaluation of the individual psychological peculiarities of the studied ethnic groups, we have found that the Russians more clearly demonstrate respect to others ( $t=2.50$  at  $p\leq 0.01$ ). This possibly means that the Russians tend to percept others positively and need to be close to other people. They are sympathetic, have good understanding of others, feel personal responsibility for their own well-being and are tolerant to the drawbacks of others. They can feel empathy, take part in social events and feel themselves responsible for the common goal. They accomplish their assignments scrupulously and responsibly. In cooperation with others, they try to avoid discrepancies and rather prefer collaboration to rivalry.

As for the representatives of the Ossetian ethnic group, self-respect is more natural for them ( $t=2.53$  at  $p\leq 0.01$ ). This feature signifies a person's tendency for independence and self-dependence. The Ossetians are always ready to protect their interests in case of competition and usually aim at being perfect.

According to the obtained data, men use the problem oriented coping in stressful situations more often than women do ( $t=-2.33$  at  $p\leq 0.05$ ). Obviously, it is more natural for men to control their emotions and be self-restraint. Thorough planning of actions towards solution of the problem and situation analysis are prevailing. Thus, men are stronger oriented at changing the problem conditions they face by searching useful information and performing active actions for their elimination than women are (see Tabl. 02.).

It was found that in stressful situations men are more cautious ( $t=-2.42$  at  $p\leq 0.05$ ) and inquisitive ( $t=-2.08$  at  $p\leq 0.05$ ) than women. This fact once again confirms that men have higher level of regulation of behavior and self-control.

Still, we need to mention that the avoidance coping is also more frequently used ( $t=-2.21$  at  $p\leq 0.05$ ) by men than by women. It is more natural for men to distract themselves from stressful situations in a merry noisy company, drinking, smoking or taking psychoactive drugs. This way they try to evade contacting with reality or escape from solution of the existing problems.

**Table 02.** Significant differences in coping behavior of women and men

Coping strategies	Women (n = 92)	Men (n = 68)	Level of significant differences
Problem oriented coping	-2.31	-2.22	$p\leq 0.01$
Emotion-focused coping	-1.98	-1.94	$p\leq 0.05$
Avoidance coping	-2.38	-2.20	$p\leq 0.01$
Distracting	3.65	3.61	$p\leq 0.01$
Seeking social support	-2.04	-1.94	$p\leq 0.01$
Concentration on emotions and their release	-3.28	-3.32	$p\leq 0.01$
Active coping	2.50	2.46	$p\leq 0.01$
Denial	2.90	3.02	$p\leq 0.01$
Behavioral escape	-3.42	-3.48	$p\leq 0.01$

However, we have found that “distraction” from the problem situation is more natural for the Russian men than for the Ossetian men ( $t=2.30$  at  $p\leq 0.05$ ). The distraction means tendency for temporary escape from solution of the existing problems by drinking alcohol, taking drugs, immersing into hobby, traveling and fulfillment of the cherished dreams. The results also demonstrate that the Russian men use the “problem avoiding” coping strategy more often than the Ossetian men do ( $t=3.61$  at  $p\leq 0.01$ ). Such behavioral strategy means ignoring thoughts about troubles, compliant behavior, passivity and wish to stay comfortable (see Tabl. 03.).

**Table 03.** Significant differences in coping behaviour of the Russian and the Ossetian men

Coping strategies	Russians (n = 36)	Ossetians (n = 32)	Level of significant differences
Emotion-focused coping	-2.14	-2.14	$p \leq 0.05$
Avoidance coping	-3.61	-3.61	$p \leq 0.01$
Distracting	3.68	3.68	$p \leq 0.01$
Seeking social support	2.30	2.30	$p \leq 0.05$
Direct social support	2.11	2.11	$p \leq 0.05$
Denial	-2.36	-2.36	$p \leq 0.05$
Coping control	-2.11	-2.11	$p \leq 0.01$

It was found that the emotion-focused coping is dominating among women ( $t = -2.78$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ). Such coping expresses itself in focus on unpleasant emotions and feelings. In the course of the study we have found that women more often deny what happened than men ( $t = -2.27$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and do not want to believe the problem is real. According to the results, a stressful situation forces women to seek support in God, faith and religion more often than men.

The level of women's tension in stressful situation is higher ( $t = -2.29$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) than men's level of tension. Possibly, it may mean that women, in case of failure, can easily fall into despair or depression (see Tabl. 04).

**Table 04.** Significant differences in coping behavior of the Russian and the Ossetian women

Coping strategies	Russians (n = 43)	Ossetians (n = 49)	Level of significant differences
Problem oriented coping	2.78	2.78	$p \leq 0.05$
Concentration on emotions and their release	-2.57	-2.57	$p \leq 0.01$
Active coping	3.22	3.22	$p \leq 0.05$
Denial	-2.58	-2.58	$p \leq 0.05$
Behavioural escape from the problem situation	-2.95	-2.95	$p \leq 0.05$
Planning of problems solution	2.44	2.44	$p \leq 0.05$

According to the performed study, the following strategies are prevailing among the Russian women: planning of problems solution ( $t = 2.44$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and active stress coping ( $t = 3.22$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ). It means that the Russian women tend to manage the difficult stressful situation using purposeful analysis of situation and possible ways of behavior, development of strategy for problem solution, planning of own actions considering objective conditions, experience and available resources.

According to the results of the study, the Russian respondents more often use the problem oriented coping, which means that they are the realists, adequately perceiving the surrounding conditions, highly adapted to everyday life, use logic in managing stressful life events and more frequently seek rational explanation of the problem.

As for the Ossetian respondents, expressiveness is predominant that means easy attitude to life, higher level of confidence in their feelings and intuition than in common sense. We shall also mention that the Ossetians are more conservative, this fact is confirmed by their adherence to traditional values and observation of ethnic behavioral norms. Among the most important values, they mention preservation of natural and cultural authenticity of their ethnic group.

It is important that in stressful situations men more often choose meaningful coping strategies, such as planning and searching for direct social support. This may mean that consideration of actions in response to the life hardships and development of behavioral tactics is more natural for men. They more often try to get advice, help or information from the social environment.

Predominance of the emotion-focused coping behavior, expressed as deep immerse into negative emotions and feelings is more natural for women. It is more natural for women than for men to deny what happened and refuse to believe in reality. Thus, trying to influence the reality, women tend to seek support in God, belief and religion. It is also more natural for women to respond the problem with humor, laugh or jokes.

Coping behavior has different content depending on the ethnic group and the gender. For example, the following coping strategies are socially acceptable for the representatives of the Russian ethnic group: positive reassessment, planning of problems solution, self-control. The leading coping type is problem oriented coping. We may assume that emotional suppression, control over emotions and management of negative feelings by their positive reconsideration are natural for the Russians. As for the representatives of the Ossetian ethnic group, focus on negative feelings and emotions related to the existing problem situation is more natural for them.

There are significant differences in coping behavior of men depending on what ethnic group they belong. For the Russian men, it is natural to escape and seek social support, and for the Ossetian men, it is natural to deny and control coping.

There are also significant differences in coping behavior of women. The Russian women tend to demonstrate self-control, which means that management of negative feelings related to the life hardship is based on purposeful emotional suppression and control over emotions, as well as mitigation of their influence on assessment of situation and selection of behavioral strategy, high control over behavior and tendency for self-restraint. As for the women of the Ossetian ethnic group, concentration on emotions and their release, as well as behavioral avoidance of the problem, are predominant.

## **7. Conclusion**

The results of ethnopsychological and gender peculiarities of coping behaviour could be used in development of recommendations on implementation of the national policy in the North Caucasus Republics. The empiric results can be used as a theoretical background for new studies of coping strategies preferred by the representatives of various ethnic groups. Such studies make informational contribution in scientific understanding of cross-cultural, social and cultural factors' influence on the process of coping behaviour generation (Khudalova, 2010). The results of the study may be used in development of recommendations on arrangement of social and psychological services in the multi-cultural regions, as well as for development of stress psychology, personality psychology, ethnic

psychology and developmental psychology (Afanasieva, 2019). It is also possible to use the empirically obtained data in practice of psychological counselling of men and women enduring life hardships.

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