

**ISCKMC 2020****International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COPING STRATEGIES AND  
PERSONALITY TRAITS OF ADOLESCENTS**

Yulia Alexandrovna Afanasyeva (a)\*, Svetlana Dzahotovna Gurieva (b)

\*Corresponding author

(a) North Ossetian State University after K.L. Khetagurov, 44–46, Vatutina str., Vladikavkaz, Russia,  
afanaseva.y@mail.ru

(b) Saint Petersburg State University, Russia, gurievasv@gmail.com

**Abstract**

The article analyzes the relationship between coping strategies and personality traits of adolescents. The sample consisted of 216 people (105 boys and 111 girls) aged 12–16 (the average age was 14.5). The study involved students of grades 7–11 of Vladikavkaz schools (the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania). Problem-oriented coping is characteristic of extroverts, active, sociable and gullible people, inclined to self-control, persistence and responsibility. This coping strategy is chosen by emotionally stable individuals with a high level of emotional comfort. There are positive correlations between the emotionally-oriented strategy and such personal traits as: demonstrativeness, suspicion, impulsivity, anxiety, tension, self-criticism and depression. This style is typical of persons who are emotionally labile and less stable. Avoidance-oriented coping is characteristic of people who are expressive, inquisitive, seeking new impressions and flexible in relation to external circumstances. The data obtained can be taken into account in the development of educational and methodological programs on developmental psychology, child psychology and psychoconsulting, personality psychology, stress psychology, etc. Teachers and psychologists have solved serious tasks, searched for forms, methods and means of psychological and pedagogical influence and modernization of the educational process. The avenue for further research is an analysis of the most effective forms and methods of work in the conditions of modern educational processes.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

*Keywords:* Coping strategies, avoidance, emotionally oriented coping, problem oriented coping

## 1. Introduction

The rapidly changing conditions create problems of the optimal functioning of individuals, associated with the process of adaptation to the requirements of the environment. This conscious adaptation is referred to as coping strategies. Coping is an individual way of coping with a difficult situation, in accordance with its importance and personal and environmental resources, which determine human behavior (Blaser et al., 1998). Its main task is to ensure and maintain human well-being, physical and mental health, and satisfaction with social relations (Afanasyeva & Gurieva, 2019a).

Of particular interest is the problem of the relationship between coping behavior of an individual in adolescence. Peculiarities of coping strategies in adolescents, as well as various factors that determine the choice of coping strategies are relevant and important for science (Moos & Schaefer, 2001). The study of the connection between coping strategies and personal traits of adolescents contributes to a better understanding of the ways of the integral functioning of the individual as a subject. Therefore, additional comprehensive studies are necessary to study the role of personal and social factors in choosing a coping strategy.

## 2. Problem Statement

The use of methods and techniques aimed at overcoming stress in unfavorable life situations is coping behavior. The term “coping” was suggested by L. Murphy in his study of ways used by children to overcome demands put forward by crises. It means changing attempts of the individual to cope with specific external and internal requirements, which are assessed as stress (Afanasyeva & Gurieva, 2019b). R. Lazarus, who considered coping as an activity aimed to maintain a balance between requirements of the environment and resources that satisfy these requirements, popularized this concept.

Lazarus et al. (2000) identified two basic styles of coping behavior:

1) Problem-oriented style: the subject analyzes what happened, turns to others for help, searches for additional information.

2) Emotionally oriented style behavior – immersion in one's own experiences, self-blame, involvement of others in the experience.

Both coping styles are necessary for the individual. They contribute to the physical and mental health.

Thus, coping strategies are associated with a system of goal-setting actions, predicting the outcome of the process, and creatively solving difficult tasks. Coping strategies are a complex multifactorial phenomenon that provides a person with productivity, good health and well-being, through the conscious choice of behaviors in accordance with personality characteristics and requirements of stressful situations (Vasserman, 2010).

Adolescents are the most vulnerable part of the population, dependent on the adult world; they often find themselves in difficult life situations that can provoke destructive strategies of behavior.

### 3. Research Questions

The sample consisted of 216 people (105 boys and 111 girls) aged 12 to 16 years. The study involved students of grades 7–11 of n Vladikavkaz schools (the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania).

### 4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the present study is to identify connections of various coping strategies with personal characteristics of modern adolescents. The following tasks are solved: identification of common coping strategies, determining personality traits of schoolchildren and establishing links between coping strategies and personality traits.

### 5. Research Methods

The study was carried out using the following empirical methods: the author's questionnaire with questions aimed at identifying socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, "Coping behavior in stressful situations" (developed by N. Endler and D. Parker, adapted by Kryukova (2015)), the methodology "Five-factor personality questionnaire BIG FIVE" (developed by P. Costa and R. McRae, adapted by A.B. Khromov). The research results were processed and analyzed using mathematical and statistical methods, computer programs Excel and "SPSS.13.0", and the Pearson's r-test.

### 6. Findings

When studying the connection between coping strategies and individual psychological characteristics, a number of correlations were revealed between the indicators of the methodology "Coping behavior in stressful situations" and "Five-factor personality questionnaire BIG FIVE".

A positive correlation between the problem-oriented coping style and such a personal property as "self-control" ( $r = 0.159$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) was revealed. This indicates that a person who is capable of controlling his emotions, thoughts and behavior, is able to achieve his goals and make informed decisions and implement them. In a stressful life situation, he uses coping strategies solving the problem through the analysis of all kinds of actions.

It was found that persons using the problem-oriented coping strategy are pronounced extroverts ( $r = 0.311$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ). They tend to establish contacts with people, are sociable, optimistic; they easily adapt to changing environmental conditions. They are proactive and appreciate praise and attention.

It was found that problem-oriented coping is characteristic of a person with high indicators of activity ( $r = 0.204$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and sociability ( $r = 0.181$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ). This suggests that coping aimed at overcoming difficulties is characteristic of an active, open person, interacting with the surrounding reality.

It was revealed that problem-oriented coping is characteristic of people who are responsible ( $r = 0.159$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ), prudent ( $r = 0.275$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ), and gullible ( $r = 0.232$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ). The data obtained

indicate that a person who controls and plans his activities in accordance with the rules adopted in society uses the problem-oriented coping strategy.

The relationship of problem-oriented coping with indicators of the scales "Understanding" ( $r = 0.198$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and "Respect for others" ( $r = 0.186$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) was determined. This may indicate that coping, aimed at a quick and high-quality solution to the problem, is more common among people who are capable of respecting and recognizing merits of other people, they express a positive attitude towards society and use it constructively for overcoming problems.

At the same time, it was found that individuals who choose the problem-oriented coping strategy have such psychological characteristics as persistence ( $r = 0.214$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and accuracy ( $r = 0.239$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) ... This is due to the fact that a person who uses the problem-oriented strategy is characterized by willpower, which is the ability to achieve a goal, while overcoming obstacles. This personality is characterized by diligence, thoroughness, and accuracy.

It was determined that with a decrease in tension ( $r = -0.195$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ), self-criticism ( $r = -0.190$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and depression ( $r = -0.254$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ), people choose the problem-oriented strategy for overcoming the crisis. This is due to the fact that mental tension is accompanied by general inconvenience, anxiety, and creates the ability to think over the current situation and purposefully resolve it.

Persons who use the emotionally-oriented coping strategy attract attention to themselves ( $r = 0.158$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ). These individuals want to be the center of attention and are looking for an opportunity for emotional release.

Emotionally oriented coping is chosen by individuals with high rates of emotional instability ( $r = 0.475$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and emotional lability ( $r = 0.396$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ), i.e. mood variability, sharp fluctuations, impulsiveness of words and actions.

A positive relationship was revealed between the indicator of the emotionally oriented strategy and such personality traits as: anxiety ( $r = 0.407$  at  $p \leq 0.001$ ) and depression ( $r = 0.349$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ). This suggests that when you fixate on your feelings of helplessness, thoughts about the impossibility of coping with difficulties and emotional imbalance develop.

Individuals who prefer the emotionally oriented strategy are characterized by self-criticism ( $r = 0.399$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ), tension ( $r = 0.408$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and curiosity ( $r = 0.22$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ): they search for own shortcomings, negative sides of own behavior.

The higher the indicators of responsibility ( $r = -0.194$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ), persistence ( $r = -0.226$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ), self-control ( $r = -0.226$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and gullibility ( $r = -0.273$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ), the less often a person chooses the emotionally oriented strategy. The correlations may indicate that among individuals who are unable to control impulsive drives and whose behavior is characterized by capriciousness and deviation from reality, persistence in achieving the desired goal is not characteristic, they are not able to make great efforts and be patient with failures.

A positive relationship between coping aimed at avoidance and the scales "Search for impressions" ( $r = 0.184$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ), "Plasticity" ( $r = 0.315$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) was identified. This suggests that adolescents who seek idleness and entertainment, do not like to work or study, like exciting impressions, and prefer risky activities choose the strategy of avoidance.

With increasing indicators on the scales, curiosity ( $r = 0.183$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and curiosity ( $r = 0.289$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ), coping aimed at avoiding is more common. Adolescents who satisfy their curiosity by showing an interest in various, sometimes even dangerous aspects of life, are easy to learn, but who are not serious enough to systematic educational activity in case of difficulties try to avoid the prevailing circumstances.

The avoidance strategy is more often chosen by adolescents with high rates of expressiveness ( $r = 0.173$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and gullibility ( $r = 0.180$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ). The presence of the identified connections suggests that such adolescents trust their own emotions, rather than common sense, paying little attention to everyday duties and avoiding routine work.

The behavior of a person who avoids situations that frighten him, is more characteristic of extroverts ( $r = 0.247$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and sociable ( $r = 0.223$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) individuals with a high level of attachment ( $r = 0.159$  at  $p \leq 0.05$ ). Such people are characterized by flexibility of behavior and sociability.

A negative relationship was revealed between the indicator "responsibility" ( $r = -0.239$  at  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and the avoidance strategy.

## 7. Conclusion

Problem-oriented coping is characteristic of extroverts, active, sociable and gullible adolescents who are prone to self-control, perseverance and responsibility. This coping strategy is chosen by emotionally stable individuals characterized by stability and self-sufficiency, with a high level of emotional comfort.

There are positive correlations between the emotionally-oriented strategy and such personal traits as: demonstrativeness, suspicion, impulsivity, anxiety, tension, self-criticism and depression. This style is typical of persons who are emotionally labile and less stable.

Avoidance-oriented coping is characteristic of adolescents who are expressive, curious, and flexible. This strategy is rarely chosen by responsible individuals who prefer to control their activities.

The data can be taken into account when developing educational and methodological programs on developmental psychology, child psychology and psychoconsulting, personality psychology, stress psychology, etc.

Modern adolescents are the younger generation, which quickly adapts to new conditions (Zeindr, 2000). Teachers and psychologists solve serious tasks of deepening knowledge about the traits of the younger generation and searching for forms, methods and means of psychological and pedagogical influence and modernization of the education process (Vitaliano, 2013). The avenue for further research is an analysis of the most forms and methods of work with young people in the conditions of modern educational processes.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would appreciate to receive feedback and comments on the paper from its readers. We are grateful to our unknown reviewers for their review and comments that greatly improved our manuscript. They will help us complete and enhance the research. The reported study was funded by the RFBR, project number 19-313-90033.

## References

- Afanasyeva, Y. A., & Gurieva, S. (2019a). Communications technologies and peculiarities of coping behavior: ethnopsychological and gender aspects. *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences EpSBS, CSIS 2019*, 17–25.
- Afanasyeva, Y. A., & Gurieva, S. (2019b). Cross-Cultural Analysis of Men's and Women's Coping Behavior. Factors of Regional Extensive Development (FRED 2019). *Advan. in Econ., Busin. and Manag. Res.*, 113, 381–385.
- Blaser, A., Heim, E., Ringer, C., & Thommen, M. (1998). *Problem Oriented Therapy. Integrated Approach* (transl. by L. Kaganov). Independent company "Klass".
- Kryukova, T. (2015). *Culture, Stress and Coping: Social and Cultural Contextualization of Coping Behavior*. KSTU.
- Lazarus, R. S., Kanner, A. D., & Folkman, S. (2000). Emotions: a cognitive phenomenological analysis. *Emotion. Theory, Res. and Experience*, 1, 185–217.
- Moos, R. H., & Schaefer, J. A. (2001). *The crisis of physical illness: An Overview and Conceptual Approach. Coping with physical illness (Veterans Administration Medical Center)*. Stanford Univer.; Palo Alto; Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4684-4772-9>
- Vasserman, L. (2010). *Stress Coping: Theory and Psychodiagnostics*. Rech.
- Vitaliano, P. P. (2013). Coping Profiles Associated With Psychiatric, Physical Health, Work, and Family Problems. *Health Psychol.*, 9(3), 348–376.
- Zeindr, M. (2000). Life events and coping resources as predictors of stress symptoms in adolescents. *Pers. Individ. Diff.*, 11(7), 693–703.