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### **COPING STRATEGIES OF THE STUDENTS WITH DIFFERENT LEVELS OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY**

*SUMMARY. The modern society, characterized by instability, increasing requirements for an activity in different life spheres, causes students' difficult life situations. The experience of such situations and having difficulties in coping with them, can lead to violations of social adaptation. The interest to the problem is combined with a limited number of psychological studies of the students' communicative activity in coping with difficult life situations. As a result of an empirical study of students with different levels of a communicative activity, the differences in the choice of adaptive, relatively adaptive and non-adaptive coping strategies were made. The practical significance of the study is due to the need of the development of methods and means to help students move from passive forms of behavior in a difficult situation to the active, conscious purposeful strategies. Obviously, the communicative activity can be considered as a resource of the student's coping behavior, providing him with a wider range of possibilities of coping with difficult life situations.*

*KEW WORDS. Communicative activity, resources of the student's coping strategy, difficult life situation.*

In the modern social and economic conditions, information and emotional load increases, thus impeding a person's adaptation to the personal-environmental interaction. The problem of students' adaptation becomes relevant, because the level of the academic progress, the ability to manage work time and time for self-study training, the ability to feel psychologically comfortable at university depend on it. Meanwhile, the research data show that an important factor contributing to the possibility of overcoming difficulties is the involvement of a person in the diverse relationships with other significant people. Positive relationships become a resource to guarantee stress reduction and to promote coping.

The problem of the use of coping strategies in the aspect of communicative activity in a difficult situation needs further exploration. The analysis of the problem study shows that there is some contradiction between the relevance of the indicated problem and its insufficient investigation in the modern science. The need to resolve this contradiction explains the relevance of the research of the strategies of coping with a difficult situation using communicative activity as a coping resource.

**The scientific development of the problem.** Foreign [1] and Russian scientists [2-5] have been investigating the issue of the coping resources. Personal traits, social groups where a person belongs, interpersonal relationships are considered to be coping resources. (Gushchina T.V., Kuftyak E.V., Petrova E.A. etc.) [6].

**Theory.** The term “resources” in psychology is considered in several perspectives. For example as a resource included in the description of the life strategies (Abulkhanova KA; Antsyferova LI; Kronik AA) [7], [8], as the ways and means of coping with stress (Lazarus R.; Hobfoll S.; Bodrov VA) [9], [10], [11], as an aspect of self-regulation, activity and behavior regulation (Kryukov TL; Demin, AN Kozhevnikov, EY; Wild LG; Shapkin S.A. etc.) [3] [4] [5] [12] [13]. For a long time the issue of resources has been considered and studied in close connection with the problem of coping ways (strategies), as well as a separate coping strategy (K.B. Matheny, D.W. Aycock etc., 2003). Such an approach stirs up terminological confusion, and the description of the content of the notion *resources* is left out of the psychological conceptions of coping.

On the one hand, the modern research is focused on the study of personal and situational factors that determine coping behavior, and on the other hand, it deals with the study of various coping strategies a person uses in difficult situations. These aspects are applied to construct models of research and are widely implemented.

Most stress-related vital problems are obviously communicative. They reflect certain deviations in the system of interpersonal relations. There are cases when a problematic situation is a direct consequence of the mistakes made while communicating or interacting with others. The opposite assumption is also true — competent, skillful communicative behavior often helps a person to prevent possible problems and crises in the relationships, as well as to find the way out of many difficult life situations.

According to T.L. Kryukova, coping is interpreted as the purposeful social behavior, meant to eliminate or reduce harmful effects of stress with the help of the adequate personal and situational methods. So, it requires the necessary level of communicative ability of a person. While searching for social support, i.e. emotional, information, effective support from other people, the skills and abilities to establish contact with people, to maintain close, confidential relations with them become important along with the personal intention.

Thus, the following *contradictions* have become obvious:

— relative description of the contextual aspects of communicative activity, and the lack of their substantial generalization in science, their description and consideration as coping mechanism;

— the need and relevance of the coping as the complex of the personal behavioral efforts, and the lack of ways to change the quality of students’ interaction with life difficulties and environment;

— the increased social need for an active personality with the high level of communication and adaptability, and underdeveloped conditions for improving and activating students’ personal resources necessary for coping;

— the desire of the society to improve its own system of communicative space for interaction and communication, and the inability of psychological services to support

it in raising the level of communicative activity, due to the lack of the methodological techniques considering communicative activity as a coping resource;

The designated contradictions give rise to a *problem* of verification of communicative activity as an individual coping resource and defining the role of this activity in the formation of coping behavior. This problem can be solved through identifying individual coping strategies connected with the certain level of individual communicative activity.

**The objective of the research:** is to study coping strategies of the students with different levels of communicative activity. The research is carried out due to the need to develop methods and tools to help people replace stereotypical forms of behavior in a difficult situation with conscious purposeful strategies.

**Methodology.** The study involved 149 first-year, second-year and third-year students from Udmurtsky State University, who combined their university studies with work, and subjectively perceived their life situation as difficult. The following methods were used: a technique for psychological diagnosing of coping mechanisms (E. Heim's test), A.I. Krupnov's judgments test, and referentmetrics. The statistical analysis of the data was conducted using the software suite «SPSS 11.5», cluster analysis (K-Means Cluster), and Fisher's criterion of angular transformation ( $\phi$ ).

**Results.** The empirical research of the coping strategies of the students with different levels of communicative activity was conducted in several stages. At the first stage the levels of communicative activity were identified by means of the cluster analysis. As a result, the students were divided into three groups. The following harmonic variables of A.I. Krupnov's judgments test were used as the clustering parameters: ergicity, sthenicity, internality, social centricity, comprehension, and objectivity.

The first group included 38 students with low rate of communicative activity, the second group included 63 students with the medium rate, the third group included 48 students with high rate of communicative activity.

The students with the low level of communicative activity are characterized by the lack of initiative, the external control locus in communication, superficial perception of sociability. Such students do not express sthenic emotions in communication. They have low indicators of social-centric motivation of communication; their methods and ways of implementing communicative activity are unvaried.

The students with the medium level of communicative activity are characterized by the internal type of communicative self-control. They are apt to the altruistic motives in communication: they pay attention and take care of others, urge to assist with the group task-management, etc. They are aware of the main functions of sociability to be personal qualities and understand its place and role in a person's life. "Medium" students are mainly focused on the subject-pragmatist realization of the communicative activity. They often have difficulties in communication; their sthenic emotions such as pleasure, admiration, optimism, etc. are slightly expressed in communication. Their desire to communicate, initiative to make friends and range of their contacts are also quite medium.

The students with the high level of communicative activity are characterized with the communicative initiative, deep and integral views on sociability, and awareness

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of its essential features. They have a developed socially-centered motivation of communicative activity; strive to realize the intentions of the close people; are willing to help them and to win their respect. The result of interpersonal interaction of such students is objective; they are characterized with the internal control locus in communication.

At the second stage of the research, the three groups of students with different levels of communicative activity underwent the analysis of the reliability of coping strategies indicators differences and the analysis of the degree of their adaptive capacities. The «low level» students proved to use such predominant cognitive strategies as problem analysis (26,3%) and dissimulation (18,4%), also such emotional strategies as optimism (31,5%), suppression of emotions (18,4%) and self-blaming (13,2%); such behavioral strategies as distraction (31,5%), retreat (21,1%) and cooperation (21,1%). These students do not use such behavioral strategy as constructive activity.

The “medium level” students used such cognitive strategy as the problem analysis (31,7%); such emotional strategies as optimism (54%) and aggression (11,1%); such behavioral strategies as distraction (22,2%) and cooperation (22,2%). The “high level” students predominantly apply such cognitive strategies as preservation of self-control (22,7%), problem analysis (20,8%) and assigning meaning (18,8%); such emotional strategy as optimism (68,6%); such behavioral strategies as distraction (25,0%) and collaboration (25,0%). In this group of students the cognitive strategy of embarrassment was not detected. To prove the reliability of the differences between the groups the Fisher’s criterion was applied; the groups of the “high level” and the “low-level” students showed more differences in the use of coping strategies. The results of the comparative analysis show that the emotional challenges connected with the personal problems are mostly typical for unsociable students with low communication activity. The depressed emotional state of the “low-level” students does not allow them to constructively cope with the difficulties. Meanwhile, “high level” students are used to be sure to find the way out of any difficult situation. «Low level» students are extremely sensitive for injustice towards them, and it encourages them to apply for the professional help of counselors.

Fisher’s criterion also made it possible to find significant differences in choosing adaptive, relatively adaptive, non-adaptive strategies by the students of the polar groups (see the table). Unlike the «high level» students, the «low level» students lack certain skills of coping with difficult life situations.

Table 1

Type of coping strategies	Coping strategies according to the degree of adaptive possibilities	Sample of students		F	R
		High	Low		
Cognitive	Relatively adaptive	10,4	4,4	1,867	≤0,05
	Adaptive	37,5	18,4	2,07	≤0,01
Emotional	Not adaptive	4,2	11,2	2,478	≤0,01
	Not adaptive	8,3	17,1	1,752	≤0,05

### Conclusions.

1. Communicative activity is regarded as an individual way to control, to deal with a threat in a difficult situation. The choice of effective ways of coping is predetermined by the unity of the individual personality traits, resources and situation settings.

2. The students with a high level of communicative activity use a variety of the main adaptive cognitive coping strategies, unlike the «medium» and «low level» students. Due to the high communicative activity they reinforce and enhance their internal resources, interact with other people, find new meanings which contribute to coping with difficulties.

3. «Medium level» and «low level» students use bigger variety of behavioral coping strategies, including adaptive, relatively adaptive and non-adaptive strategies. Non-adaptive strategies in coping behavior of these students reduce its efficiency.

4. It was revealed that the high rate of communicative activity decreases the probability of choosing the non-adaptive strategies such as «retreat», «self-blaming», «submissiveness» and «aggression». Meanwhile, the intensity of such adaptive strategies as «preserving self-control», «problem analysis» and «cooperation», associated with active overcoming of difficult life situations increases; i.e. the probability of choosing adaptive and relatively adaptive behavioral and socially-focused strategies, against the non-adaptive ones, increases.

5. The high level of communicative activity guarantees a wider range of arbitrary coping strategies and strategies of the search for the social support in difficult life situations.

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