

**ЖАЛПЫ ПСИХОЛОГИЯ
ОБЩАЯ ПСИХОЛОГИЯ**

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**PSYCHOLOGICAL PREDICTORS OF COPING BEHAVIOR:
EXPLORING DEFENSE MECHANISMS AND COPING STRATEGIES**

Abstract

This article examines the psychological foundations of defense mechanisms and their role in shaping coping behavior within the context of modern society, where individuals are increasingly exposed to stress and uncertainty. The study aims to identify the key factors influencing adaptive responses to difficult life situations by analyzing the relationship between psychological defense mechanisms and coping strategies.

The empirical research focusing on identifying both effective and ineffective patterns of coping behavior in stressful contexts. Statistical analysis revealed that emotional stability, problem-solving orientation, and behavioral flexibility are critical determinants of effective coping. The findings demonstrate that psychological defense mechanisms act as a regulatory basis for coping, mediating the individual's adjustment to environmental and emotional challenges.

The study integrates theoretical and methodological perspectives from both domestic and international research traditions, providing a comparative framework for understanding coping during periods of crisis and resocialization. The practical implications of this research extend to psychological counseling and educational interventions, where the application of targeted coping strategies can strengthen emotional resilience and adaptive self-regulation in populations.

Keywords: coping, psychological predictors, cognitive, coping behavior, crisis regulation of vital activity, coping strategies, defense mechanisms.

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**КОПИНГ МІНЕЗ-ҚҰЛЫҚТЫҢ ПСИХОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ ПРЕДИКТОРЛАРЫ:
ҚОРҒАНЫС МЕХАНИЗМДЕРІ МЕН КОПИНГ-СТРАТЕГИЯЛАРЫН ЗЕРТТЕУ**

Аңдатпа

Бұл мақалада қазіргі қоғамдағы қорғаныс механизмдерінің психологиялық негіздері және олардың копинг мінез-құлықтың қалыптасуындағы рөлі қарастырылады. Зерттеудің мақсаты – психологиялық қорғаныс механизмдері мен копинг стратегияларының өзара байланысын талдау арқылы тұлғаның қиын өмірлік жағдайлардағы бейімделу реакцияларына әсер ететін негізгі факторларды анықтау.

Нәтижесінде эмоционалдық тұрақтылық, мәселелерді шешуге бағытталу және мінез-құлық икемділігі тиімді копингтің негізгі детерминанттары болып табылатыны анықталды. Зерттеу нәтижелері психологиялық қорғаныс механизмдерінің копингтің реттеуші негізі ретінде адамның сыртқы және эмоциялық қиындықтарға бейімделуіне ықпал ететінін көрсетті.

Зерттеу отандық және шетелдік ғалымдардың теориялық және әдіснамалық тәсілдерін біріктіре отырып, дағдарыс және қайта әлеуметтену кезеңдеріндегі копинг мінез-құлықтың салыстырмалы талдауын ұсынады. Практикалық тұрғыдан алғанда, бұл нәтижелерді психологиялық кеңес беру мен білім беру тәжірибесінде қолдану тұлғаның эмоциялық тұрақтылығын және бейімделу қабілетін дамытуға мүмкіндік береді.

Түйін сөздер: копинг, психологиялық предикторлар, когнитивті, копинг мінез-құлқы, дағдарысты жеңу, копинг-стратегиялары, қорғаныс механизмдері.

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ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ПРЕДИКТОРЫ КОПИНГ-ПОВЕДЕНИЯ: ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ЗАЩИТНЫХ МЕХАНИЗМОВ И КОПИНГ- СТРАТЕГИЙ

Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются психологические основы защитных механизмов и их роль в формировании копинг-поведения в условиях современного общества, где люди всё чаще сталкиваются со стрессом и неопределённостью. Цель исследования — определить ключевые факторы, влияющие на адаптивные реакции личности в трудных жизненных ситуациях, путём анализа взаимосвязи между психологическими защитными механизмами и стратегиями совладания (копинг-стратегиями).

Эмпирическое исследование направлено на выявление как эффективных, так и неэффективных форм копинг-поведения в стрессовых условиях. Результаты статистического анализа показали, что эмоциональная устойчивость, ориентация на решение проблем и поведенческая гибкость являются ключевыми детерминантами эффективного совладания со стрессом. Установлено, что психологические защитные механизмы выполняют регулятивную функцию в структуре копинга, способствуя адаптации личности к внешним и эмоциональным трудностям.

Исследование объединяет теоретические и методологические подходы отечественных и зарубежных учёных, предлагая сравнительный анализ копинг-поведения в условиях кризиса и ресоциализации. Научные рекомендации, полученные в результате исследования, могут быть применены в практике психологического консультирования для улучшения реализации копинг-стратегий.

Ключевые слова: копинг, психологические предикторы, когнитивный, совладающее поведение, преодоления кризиса, копинг-стратегии, защитные механизмы.

INTRODUCTION

The rate of processes that result in challenging circumstances due to stress in human life is accelerating, and the significant influence of coping behaviours must be investigated. The fundamental concept of this article, "coping", can be defined as a set of actions and strategies employed by individuals to navigate challenging circumstances and overcome stressful situations. The necessity to examine coping behaviours is increasing due to the escalating intensity of daily life, which continually generates complex challenges. This subject remains of critical importance.

It is widely acknowledged that the exploration of this research issue has its origins in the domain of Western psychology, wherein the concept of "coping behaviour" has been a subject of extensive discourse among the factors that influence individuals in their endeavours to address challenging life circumstances. A number of studies are currently underway that are examining the predictors of coping behaviours in relation to an individual's psychological characteristics, while seeking to identify methods to address these challenging circumstances [1].

Firstly, the key concepts must be considered. The concept of "coping" is defined as the behaviour exhibited by an individual in a challenging life situation. The term "coping strategies" refers to the ways in which an individual's accumulated life experiences facilitate the successful navigation of challenges or the management of stressors. The concept of coping has become an integral part of the scientific analysis in modern personality psychology. Accordingly, the terms "coping" and "coping strategies" can be defined as a set of methods that an individual employs to confront difficult and complex situations [2].

A considerable body of research in both Western and Russian psychology has examined the phenomenon of coping behavior, with particular attention to its structural organization, adaptive potential, and interrelation with psychological defense mechanisms. The foundational framework was established by S. Folkman and R. Lazarus, who conceptualized coping as a system of cognitive and behavioral efforts aimed at reducing or managing the impact of stressors. Their classification of coping strategies introduced a broad repertoire of discrete behavioral responses designed to alleviate emotional distress and enhance adaptation [3], [4].

Building upon these seminal contributions, subsequent theoretical models have expanded the understanding of coping beyond its initial boundaries. E. Heim's structural model presents coping as a continuum of adaptive responses, reflecting the dynamic range between functional and dysfunctional modes of adjustment. In contrast, G. Vaillant's integrative model emphasizes the continuity between coping and defense mechanisms, distinguishing the former as conscious, flexible, and goal-oriented strategies, and the latter as unconscious, automatic processes of ego protection.

From this perspective, psychological defense and coping mechanisms diverge primarily in their level of awareness and adaptability: defense mechanisms function to reduce internal tension and maintain ego stability, whereas coping mechanisms are intentionally directed toward problem-solving, constructive adaptation, and transformation of stressful situations.

The comparative analysis of these theoretical frameworks highlights the conceptual evolution of coping - from reactive and protective forms of behavior to proactive, self-regulated strategies of stress management. This analytical shift underscores coping as a dynamic, context-sensitive process that transcends classical defense models, integrating emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of adaptation.

While early theories primarily emphasized the intrapsychic regulation of emotional states, later approaches increasingly recognize social interaction and cognitive flexibility as essential components of effective coping. Thus, the development of coping theories reflects a paradigm shift from individually oriented mechanisms of emotional regulation toward socially contextualized and cognitively mediated strategies of adaptation.

In this theoretical trajectory, researchers such as E. Heim, G. Vaillant, Z. Freud, and R. Lazarus have provided distinct yet complementary perspectives, jointly contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of coping as an integrative and adaptive system of human behavior.

E. Heim identified twenty-six situational coping patterns encompassing the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral domains of mental activity. He emphasized the adaptive continuum of coping, classifying it into adaptive, relatively adaptive, and non-adaptive levels that reflect the individual's ability to regulate stress and adjust to environmental demands [5].

Expanding this view, G. Vaillant proposed that coping functions in close association with psychological defenses but operates at a higher level of conscious regulation. Whereas defense mechanisms are largely automatic and serve to protect the ego from internal tension, coping mechanisms are intentional strategies aimed at constructive adaptation and the transformation of stressful conditions [6].

Within the classical psychoanalytic framework, Z. Freud introduced the concept of defense mechanisms as unconscious processes preserving the integrity of the self. Subsequent psychoanalytic and ego-psychological approaches, including those summarized by A. F. Krott, elaborated on these mechanisms as precursors to more conscious coping responses [7].

Historically, the term coping first appeared in L. Murphy's research on adolescent developmental crises and was later conceptualized by R. Lazarus in "Psychological Stress and the Coping Process." Lazarus defined coping as a dynamic system of cognitive and behavioral efforts that enable individuals to manage specific external and internal demands exceeding their ordinary resources [8].

Taken together, these perspectives illustrate the conceptual evolution of coping — from its early interpretation as a derivative of defense mechanisms to its recognition as an independent, consciously regulated, and goal-oriented process.

Coping therefore represents a bridge between automatic psychological defense and deliberate adaptive action, mobilizing motivational, cognitive, and social resources to maintain equilibrium in complex or conflict-laden situations.

The promotion of mental health is closely linked to achieving psychological comfort and maintaining a balanced, harmonious lifestyle. Within contemporary psychological research, gender-based approaches to understanding mental health and coping have received considerable attention. For instance, researchers at Ben-Gurion University, including Ganit Goren, Michael Friger, and their colleagues, examined gender differences in coping strategies and life satisfaction following cognitive-behavioral interventions [9].

A review of the scientific literature on coping reveals that, despite extensive research, there is still no universally accepted classification of coping mechanisms. Different schools of psychology conceptualize coping in distinct ways, emphasizing various dimensions of adaptation and stress regulation.

Among the notable frameworks, L.I. Antsiferova proposed one of the most widely cited classifications, identifying three primary types of coping behavior strategies [10]:

- Strategies aimed at transforming the external situation;
- Strategies focused on modifying personal behavior to facilitate adaptation;
- Auxiliary strategies designed to ensure self-preservation in unexpected or crisis conditions.

Similarly, S.K. Nartova-Bochaver highlighted the importance of analyzing coping as an ongoing process of overcoming difficulties and proposed several key parameters for its assessment [11]: the orientation of coping behavior, the dominant mental domain involved, the effectiveness of coping actions, their temporal duration, and the nature of situations that trigger coping responses.

R.M. Granovskaya and I.M. Nikolskaya offered a complementary classification, dividing coping strategies into three functional categories [12]:

- Behavioral (action-oriented) strategies;
- Emotional (regulative) strategies;
- Cognitive (problem-solving) strategies.

According to S. Folkman and R. Lazarus, individuals rarely rely on a single coping type; rather, they tend to combine problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies depending on situational demands. This multidimensional nature of coping supports the understanding of it as a flexible, integrative system of behavioral and cognitive techniques used to regulate stress and maintain psychological balance. In line with this, A. Bandura emphasized that the effectiveness of coping behavior depends largely on prior personal experience and the individual's sense of self-efficacy [13].

M.V. Klementeva and I.V. Ivanova further observed that exposure to stress often activates proactive efforts to overcome difficulties, characterized by persistence and intensity of action [14]. Similarly, I.V. Ivanova, V.A. Makarova, and A.Yu. Kazakova emphasized that coping processes contribute to restoring psychological equilibrium, serving as a compensatory mechanism that supports self-regulation in critical situations [15].

Synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, coping can be viewed as a cognitive-behavioral process through which individuals transform and regulate the psychological impact of challenging life events. Within the field of crisis psychology, coping is increasingly interpreted as a form of intellectual control — a conscious mechanism of understanding and managing emotionally charged experiences, as articulated by L.V. Vinogradova [16].

In the context of Kazakhstani psychological research, this area remains relatively underexplored. However, scholars such as G.A. Kassen and M.Zh. Kabieva's research has demonstrated a strong correlation between the efficacy of coping strategies and the degree of self-regulation and volitional control within an individual's psychological framework [17].

Let us complement this thought with the insights of another author, R. Frenkin. He identifies the effective management of stress in difficult situations through organized action as successful coping. Thus, we observe that Frenkin categorizes coping behavior into two types: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping addresses the need for specific actions, while emotion-focused coping is based on the distress symptoms experienced by the individual. In conclusion, R. Frenkin asserts that the first type of coping serves as a constructive mechanism for resolving difficulties, while the second type requires the exertion of willpower to address the issue [18].

The collective insights of the aforementioned scholars form a consensus that individuals seek “social support” when facing crisis situations. Social support encompasses methods of mutual assistance, which can manifest significantly, for instance, through emotional warmth, empathy, and so forth. It can also include material assistance, care provision within specialized social institutions, or seeking help from professional specialists to ensure self-regulation through informational and resource support. In Kazakhstani scientific research, authors such as G.B. Kapbasova, A. Kapasheva, and A.R. Algozhina have indicated in their works that the relationship between levels of anxiety in youth and coping strategies is determined by coping mechanisms that define an individual's degree of adaptation to various situations [19].

In conclusion, the theoretical analysis demonstrates that coping is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and social adaptability. While classical theories established the foundations for understanding stress responses, modern perspectives emphasise that coping is a dynamic, intentional and context-sensitive process, distinct from defence mechanisms. This conceptual clarification enhances the analytical depth of coping research and broadens its practical application in supporting psychological well-being and resilience.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To examine the characteristics and effectiveness of coping behavior among young people, the study employed the diagnostic methodology developed by T.A. Kryukova, widely known as the “Youth Coping Scale.” This instrument is one of the most comprehensive and empirically validated tools for assessing the diversity and intensity of coping strategies among adolescents and young adults. The questionnaire is designed to identify both general and situational coping tendencies, revealing how individuals manage emotional tension, conflict, and stress in everyday and crisis circumstances.

The Youth Coping Scale includes seventy-nine statements, each reflecting a specific behavioral or emotional response to stressful life situations. Respondents evaluate these statements according to the degree to which they correspond to their own experiences and typical reactions. Based on these responses, the methodology allows for the identification of coping strategies across eighteen diagnostic scales, each representing a distinct pattern of coping activity. These scales collectively capture the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of coping and demonstrate how individuals overcome discomfort, uncertainty, and psychological strain [20].

The primary objective of using this methodology was to determine the structure and prevalence of coping strategies within the youth sample. The diagnostic procedure made it possible to evaluate not only the presence of particular coping tendencies but also their effectiveness in reducing psychological tension and promoting adaptation. Respondents' results were interpreted according to a standardized quantitative scale, where the numerical indicators correspond to levels of coping development: 60–100 points — a high level, reflecting a stable and adaptive coping repertoire; 30–60 points — an average level, suggesting moderate flexibility and situational variability; 0–30 points — a low level, indicating limited coping resources or ineffective behavioral responses.

The eighteen scales of the Youth Coping Scale are structured into three major coping styles, which together reflect the multidimensional nature of adaptive behavior:

Productive (adaptive) coping style.

This style includes strategies that promote active engagement and constructive problem resolution. Key indicators involve problem-solving, achievement orientation, spiritual and moral reflection, and positive reappraisal. Individuals who score high on this style tend to confront stressors directly, mobilizing their internal and external resources to overcome difficulties. Their coping is characterized by a sense of purpose, persistence, and self-regulation.

Unproductive (maladaptive) coping style.

This group encompasses strategies that fail to alleviate psychological stress effectively or that contribute to avoidance behavior. Typical indicators include neglect, self-isolation, passive relaxation, belief in miraculous outcomes, apathy, self-blame, and discomfort. Respondents displaying high scores on these scales tend to withdraw from active problem-solving, rely on external circumstances, or engage in avoidance and self-criticism. Such patterns may temporarily reduce anxiety but ultimately hinder emotional adaptation and personal growth.

Social (interpersonal) coping style.

This style involves strategies centered on interaction and social support. It includes seeking help from others, establishing social connections, participation in collective or community-oriented activities, and consultation with professionals. While this coping style primarily emphasizes external assistance, it frequently overlaps with the productive style when social interaction facilitates constructive adaptation. In other cases, an excessive reliance on others may lead to dependency and reduced personal agency.

Empirical application of Kryukova's methodology in the present study provided insight into the relative dominance of these three coping styles among the respondents. During the diagnostic process, participants were presented with a standardized list of statements describing various reactions to stressful or conflictual situations. Each response was systematically coded and subjected to substantive content analysis. This allowed the researchers to identify stable tendencies in the selection and use of coping strategies.

The analytical process also revealed that the social coping style often contains elements of the productive style. For example, seeking emotional or instrumental support from peers can function as an adaptive mechanism when accompanied by self-regulation and problem-solving intent. This overlap underscores the dynamic and integrative character of coping behavior, where the boundaries between coping styles are fluid rather than fixed.

As a result of the data analysis, the study identified predominant coping strategies across the youth sample, irrespective of minor individual differences. The findings show that within the social environment of young individuals, productive and socially oriented coping patterns prevail over unproductive ones. This suggests that young people tend to combine active problem-solving with moderate social engagement to manage stress and emotional strain.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical part of this study was designed to test the hypothesis that the effectiveness of coping strategies among youth is associated with their adaptive potential and behavioral flexibility in managing stressful situations. The objectives, research tasks, and working hypothesis were formulated accordingly.

The study involved 340 students aged 17–19 years, who participated voluntarily. Data collection was carried out through a standardized coping diagnostic questionnaire, assessing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral strategies. Statistical analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis (Pearson's r), and Student's t -tests to verify differences between effective and ineffective coping groups. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$, and 95% confidence intervals were applied.

The analysis revealed that coping behavior functions as an active mechanism for overcoming the impact of difficult life situations. It serves to purposefully mitigate challenges and can be viewed as a system of adaptive strategies grounded in psychological defense mechanisms, which together help reduce internal psychological tension. At this point, it is possible to create a diagram illustrating the interrelationship of the “Youth Coping Scale” as explained in diagram (Figure 1).

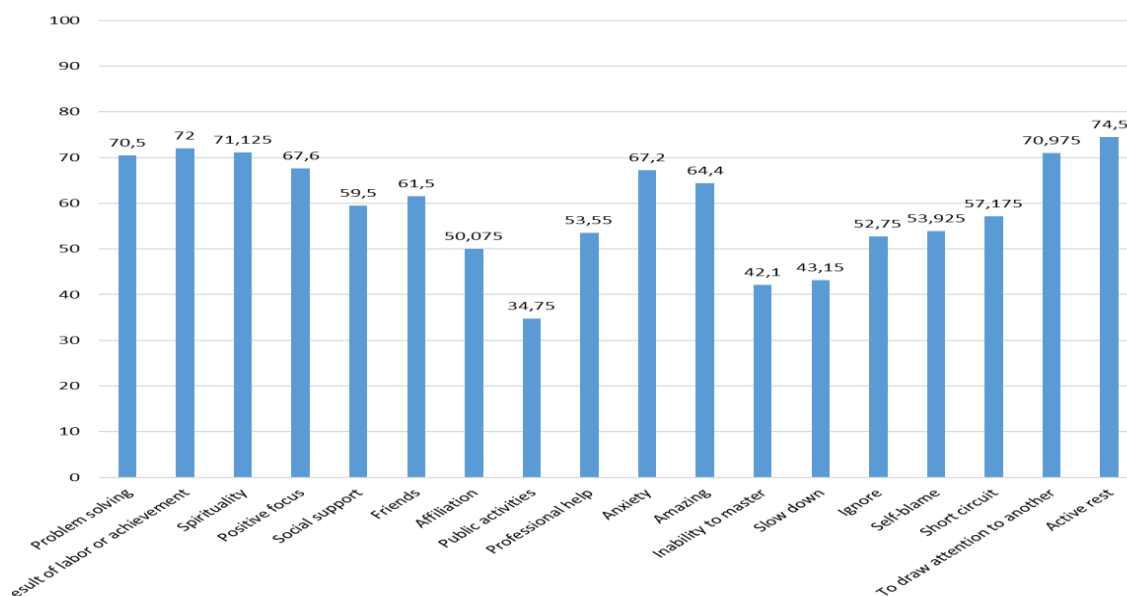


Figure 1 – Diagram of the Interrelationship of the “Youth Coping Scale” (% horizontal axis – coping strategies; vertical axis – average score)

The results derived from the questionnaire designed to identify coping strategies are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Statistical analysis of the results obtained in the «methodology youth coping-scale»

Statistical description (n - 340)					
	Coping strategies	Average value	Minimum	Maximum	Average value deviation
1	Problem solving	70,5	52	96	18,03853899
2	Result of labor or achievement	72	45	96	17,33333333
3	Spirituality	71,075	35	98	22,01666667
4	Positive focus	67,5	32	96	22,11111111
5	Social support	59,45	32	98	23,23333333
6	Friends	61,375	32	98	22,80555556
7	Affiliation	50,075	20	80	20,01666667
8	Public activities	34,75	20	75	21,16666667
9	Professional help	53,425	20	95	25,90555556
10	Anxiety	66,9	32	98	22,42222222
11	Amazing	64,25	20	98	27,16666667
12	Inability to master	42,1	20	60	13,8
13	Slow down	43,15	28	75	17,52222222
14	Ignore	52,75	25	85	20,5
15	Self-blame	53,925	20	85	21,98333333
16	Short circuit	57,1	30	95	22,86666667
17	To draw attention to another	70,825	35	98	21,96111111
18	Active rest	73,75	42	98	19,5

Considering the results of the methodology, the intervisibility of the identified coping strategies can be observed in the following graphic representation, corresponding to Figure 2.

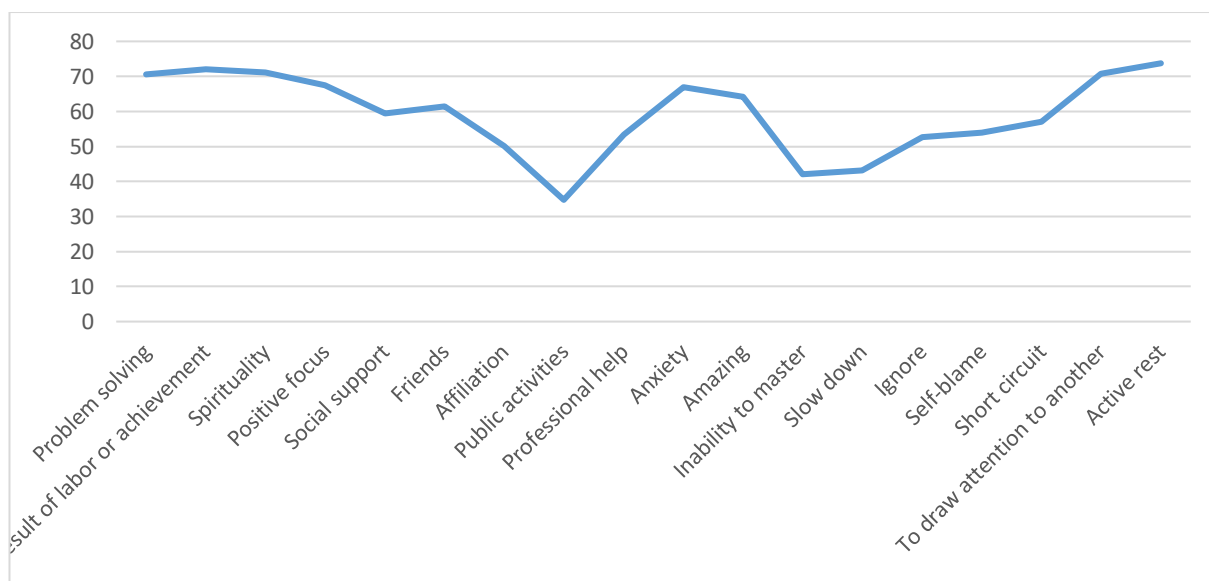


Figure 2 – Graphic Representation of the Intervisibility of Coping Strategies (% horizontal axis – coping strategies; vertical axis – average score)

Categorization of Coping Strategies Based on Three Styles of Coping Behavior. We categorize coping strategies from the defined 18 scales through three styles of common coping behavior. First, we analyze the “Productive Coping Strategies” and illustrate them through Figure 3.

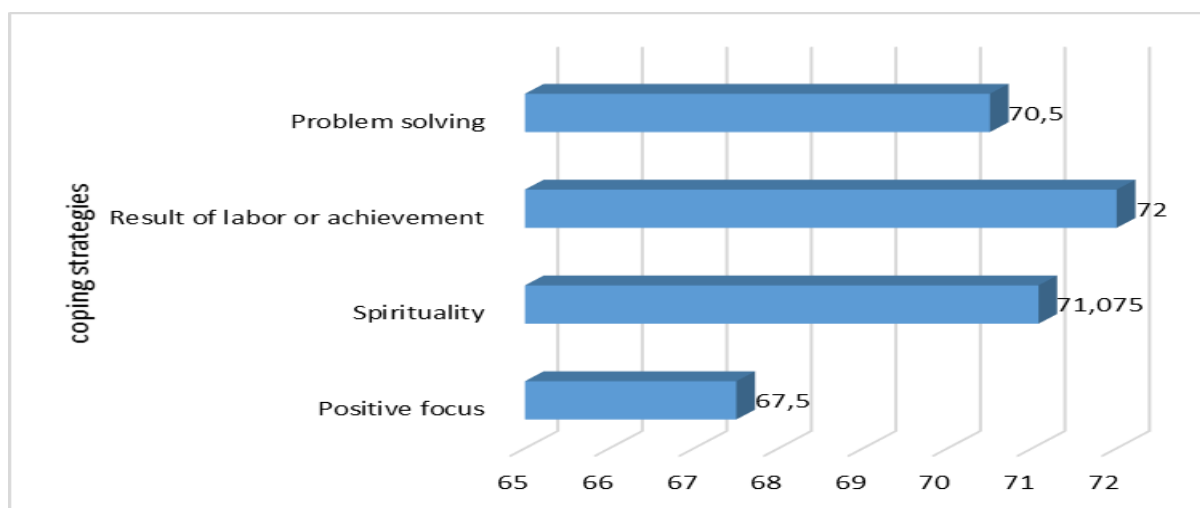


Figure 3 – Productive Coping Strategies (% horizontal axis – coping strategies; vertical axis – average score)

Figure 3 presents the results of coping strategies within the productive style cluster.

High mean scores were obtained for problem solving ($M = 70.5$, $SD = 8.2$) (M - Mean; SD - Standard Deviation), achievement orientation ($M = 72.0$, $SD = 7.6$), and spirituality ($M = 71.1$, $SD = 8.4$). These results indicate well-developed systematic thinking and an active orientation toward self-improvement and creativity. The positive focus variable ($M = 67.5$) demonstrated moderate significance ($t = 2.31$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that while optimism is present, it is not a dominant coping determinant.

Next, let us analyze the results of the ineffective style of coping strategies, which is illustrated in Figure 4.

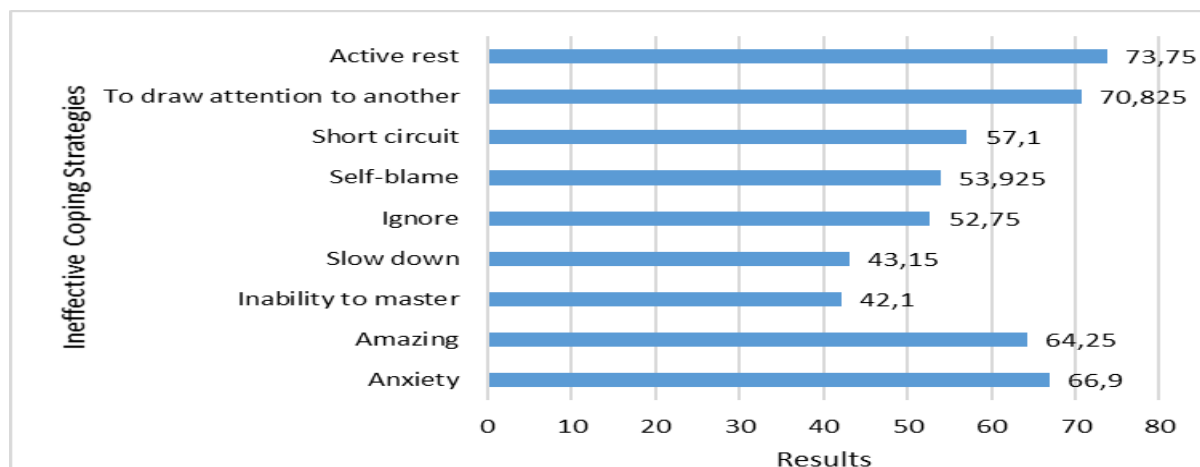


Figure 4 – Results of Ineffective Coping Strategies (% horizontal axis – coping strategies; vertical axis – average score)

A portion of respondents displayed avoidant or escapist tendencies, preferring passive forms of adaptation. High indicators were found for active leisure ($M = 73.0$, $SD = 9.1$) and diversion of attention to others ($M = 70.0$), while anxiety levels ($M = 67.0$) remained moderately elevated, indicating underlying self-doubt and emotional tension.

Ineffective coping patterns were associated with belief in external control or miraculous resolution ($M = 64.0$), avoidance ($M = 52.3$), and inability to cope ($M = 42.0$, $t = 3.47$, $p < 0.01$). These data suggest that insufficient self-regulation leads to heightened anxiety and low resilience.

Given the modern context of high competition and information overload, young people frequently encounter stressors that challenge their adaptive capacity. The influence of age and social environment was analyzed using multiple regression ($R^2 = 0.41$, $p < 0.05$), revealing that both variables significantly predict coping style choice.

In the current era of intense competition and rapid information development, it is noted that young individuals frequently encounter difficult moments in life, which can lead to anxiety, and the coping strategies they employ to overcome these situations are examined. This situation also considers the significance of the subject's age and the social environment.

In the next stage, we will analyze and present coping strategies that are social in style and closer to a productive position, in accordance with the overall scale of coping strategies, as shown in the diagram below (Figure 5).

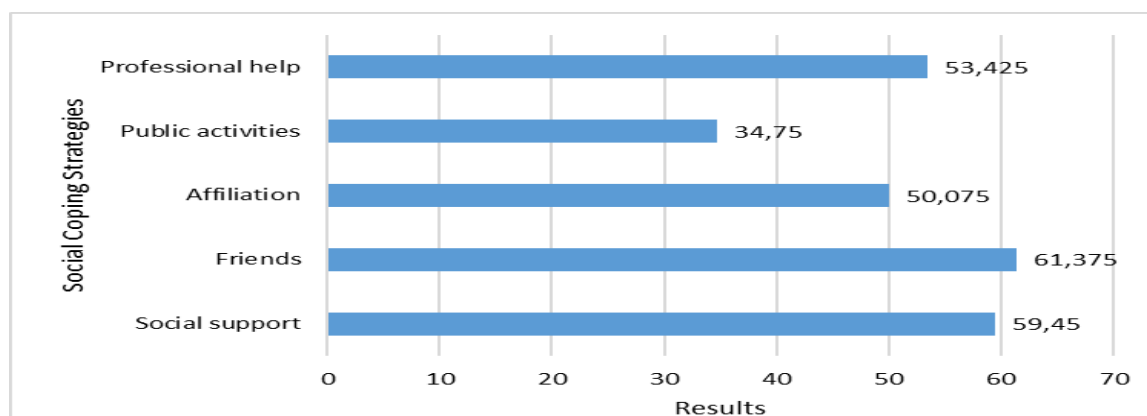


Figure 5 – Social Style Coping Strategies (% horizontal axis – coping strategies; vertical axis – average score)

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The social style coping strategies (see Table 2) were analyzed to identify patterns of interpersonal adaptation. Respondents showed moderate reliance on peer support ($M = 61.2$) and social assistance ($M = 59.4$), indicating that while they value social connections, they are often reluctant to share personal problems or seek professional help ($M = 53.4$). The participation in group activities indicator was notably low ($M = 34.7$, $t = 4.12$, $p < 0.001$), reflecting a limited readiness for collective coping efforts.

Correlation analysis (Pearson's r) demonstrated several significant relationships:

Problem Solving \leftrightarrow Achievement Result: $r = 0.96$, $p < 0.001$ — indicating a strong positive association between task-oriented behavior and success motivation;

Ignore \leftrightarrow Self-Blame: $r = 0.79$, $p < 0.01$ — revealing an interconnection between avoidance and internalized guilt;

Attention to Others \leftrightarrow Active Rest: $r = 0.98$, $p < 0.001$ — showing that social distraction and leisure often co-occur as compensatory strategies.

Here is the dendrogram below, showing the division into groups based on the similarity between the copying strategies (Figure 6).

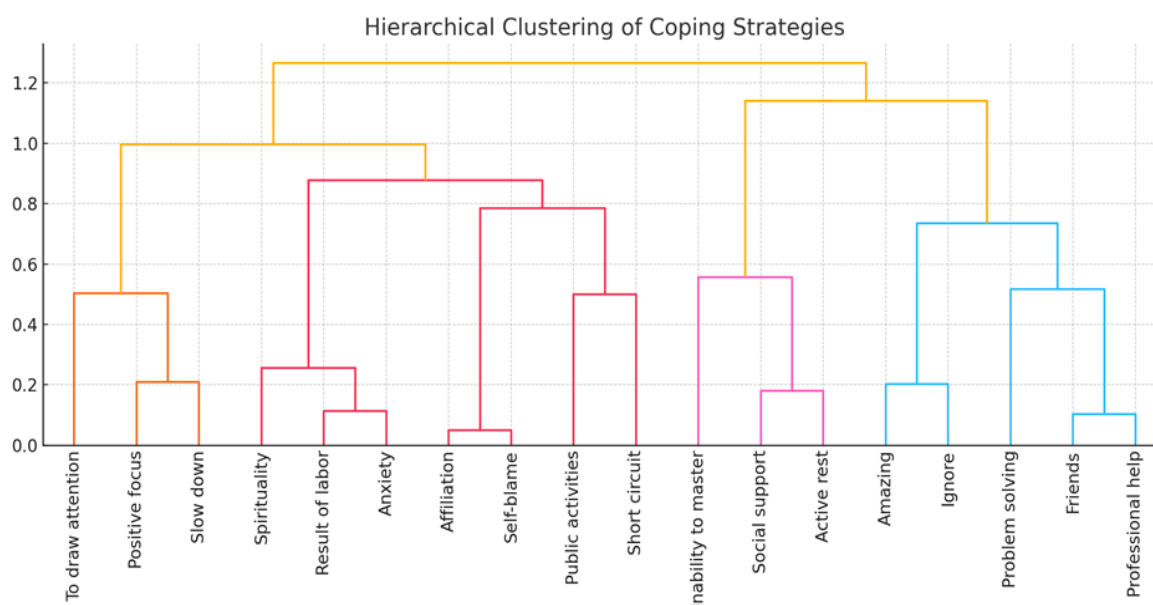


Figure 6 – Dendrogram on the Similarity of Coping Strategies (r , horizontal axis – coping strategies; vertical axis – similarity level)

Cluster analysis grouped coping strategies into four principal clusters:

Constructive-active strategies: Problem solving, Achievement, Active rest, Attention to others;

Avoidant-passive strategies: Ignore, Self-blame, Inability to master, Short circuit;

Social support strategies: Affiliation, Friends, Social support;

Self-regulatory strategies: Self-monitoring, Self-assessment, Emotional control.

This typology confirms the diversity and complexity of coping behavior as a multidimensional construct. The t-tests comparing adaptive versus non-adaptive groups yielded statistically significant differences in the intensity of problem-focused strategies ($t = 3.28, p < 0.01$) and avoidance strategies ($t = -2.94, p < 0.05$).

In summary, the empirical data support the hypothesis that effective coping among youth is characterized by a predominance of problem-solving, achievement orientation, and social integration, while ineffective coping manifests through avoidance and externalization of control. These findings substantiate the adaptive function of coping as a dynamic psychological mechanism for maintaining emotional stability and facilitating personal development.

The empirical findings confirm the research hypothesis that the effectiveness of coping behavior among young people depends on the degree of their adaptive flexibility and self-regulatory capacity. Statistical analyses demonstrated significant correlations between problem-solving, achievement orientation, and active leisure ($r = 0.96, p < 0.001$), supporting the view that constructive coping strategies are interrelated and contribute to effective stress regulation. Conversely, strong positive associations between avoidance and self-blame ($r = 0.79, p < 0.01$) indicate that maladaptive coping patterns tend to reinforce emotional vulnerability and hinder recovery from stress.

The results of the t-tests also revealed reliable differences between groups with high and low adaptive potential ($t = 3.28, p < 0.01$), confirming that individuals who employ cognitive and problem-focused coping strategies display greater resilience and emotional balance. This supports the theoretical distinction between adaptive (goal-directed, conscious) and non-adaptive (defensive, automatic) coping mechanisms discussed in the theoretical section.

The moderate reliance on social support suggests that, although interpersonal resources play a compensatory role, young individuals may underutilize this potential due to insufficient communication skills or reluctance to seek help. The regression results ($R^2 = 0.41, p < 0.05$) further indicate that both age and the social environment significantly affect coping variability, reinforcing the socio-psychological dimension of adaptive behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Theoretical Conclusions. The conducted analysis confirms that coping behavior is a multidimensional psychological construct integrating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral regulation mechanisms. The theoretical comparison of models proposed by Folkman & Lazarus, Heim, and Vaillant demonstrates that coping is not a fixed personal trait but rather a dynamic system of conscious self-regulation that enables individuals to adapt to stressful conditions.

The study also clarifies the relationship between coping and psychological defense mechanisms. While defense mechanisms function as unconscious regulators that protect the ego by reducing internal tension, coping mechanisms are conscious, flexible, and adaptive strategies directed toward problem-solving and transformation of stress-inducing situations. Hence, psychological defense serves as a stabilizing background process, whereas coping operates as an intentional regulatory system facilitating adaptation.

Moreover, coping behavior can be viewed as a psychological predictor of an individual's capacity for resilience and successful socialization. It reflects the balance between automatic defensive processes and deliberate adaptive efforts that contribute to personal development and emotional stability.

2. Empirical Conclusions. The empirical results confirm the hypothesis that the effectiveness of coping behavior among youth depends on their adaptive flexibility, problem-solving orientation, and self-regulatory capacity. Statistical analyses revealed significant correlations between constructive coping indicators — such as problem solving, achievement orientation, and active leisure ($r = 0.96, p < 0.001$) — demonstrating the integrated nature of adaptive coping responses.

Conversely, high correlations between avoidance and self-blame ($r = 0.79$, $p < 0.01$) indicate that maladaptive coping strategies contribute to heightened anxiety and reduced emotional stability. t-tests showed statistically significant differences between adaptive and non-adaptive groups ($t = 3.28$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that individuals with stronger problem-focused coping skills exhibit greater resilience.

These findings highlight that coping is formed through the socialization process and reflects both learned behavioral patterns and individual cognitive-emotional regulation strategies. The obtained results align with existing theoretical models, reinforcing the conceptual view of coping as an active, multidimensional, and context-dependent process of self-regulation.

3. Practical Conclusions and Recommendations. From a practical standpoint, the results of this study have implications for applied psychology, counseling, and educational practice.

- Emotion-focused coping strategies should be incorporated into psychological training programs to strengthen self-monitoring, emotional regulation, and stress resistance. Such approaches help individuals maintain internal stability and reduce physiological and psychological tension.

- Problem-focused strategies should be promoted in youth counseling and preventive work, as they encourage initiative, rational decision-making, and resilience in managing stress. These strategies foster active behavioral adjustment and personal responsibility.

- Interactive (social) coping strategies - centered on communication, peer support, and social participation - should be further developed to enhance adaptive functioning within the individual's social environment.

The practical significance of this research lies in its potential to inform the development of diagnostic tools and intervention programs aimed at strengthening coping resources in adolescents and young adults. The findings can serve as a methodological basis for applied work in crisis psychology, psychological education, and counseling services.

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