

PERSONALITY-MEDIATED DIFFERENCES IN COPING BEHAVIOR AS PRECURSORS OF THE SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

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Abstract

The phenomenon of the subjective well-being (SWB), which is used in the contemporary personality research as the correlate of the key notion of the lay theories of happiness, is claimed to be determined predominantly by neuroticism, since the demographic personality factors, widely investigated in this context, appeared to have only about 10 % effect on happiness. The objective of this study was to examine the hypothesis of the existence of a hierarchy of the personality precursors of the subjective well-being and mental health continuum (MHC), which were verified through the mediating effect on the choice of the different forms and strategies of coping behavior. Using the statistical methods of the correlational, factor and cluster analysis, it was found out on a sample of a 64 university undergraduates, that SWB and MHC are determined by the hierarchy of personality precursors, the key role among which is played by ego-involvement (strive to self-evolution), ego-identity (self-esteem and belief in self-efficacy), while neuroticism had significant negative correlations only in one out of three factors singled out in the sample. It was concluded that the higher are the levels of ego-involvement and ego-identity, the more diverse is the repertoire of the constructive coping strategies and forms of coping behavior. The phenomenon of self-handicapping, conceptualized in this research as the form of non-constructive proactive coping, appeared to be significantly lower in clusters with high ego-identity and ego-involvement. Thus, its status as a non-constructive coping strategy was confirmed.

Keywords: Subjective well-being, ego-identity, ego-involvement, coping behavior, self-handicapping

Introduction

The efforts of the contemporary psychologists to define the aspects of personality, promoting the actualization of human potential, have revived an interest in the Aristotelian ideas of the eudaimonic and hedonic components of happiness as a likely consequential outcome of self-actualization. In the science of happiness the latter is conceptualized in terms of the subjective well-being (Diener, 1984). The notion of the subjective well-being is defined as having two components: cognitive and affective ones, assessed respectively through the satisfaction with life and the ratio of the positive and negative emotions, experienced by the individual in the real-life settings (Diener, 2000).

There is empirical evidence confirming that the subjective well-being taps both: the eudaimonic and hedonic perspectives of happiness. It has been reported in recent studies (Diener et al., 2010; Dogan, Totan & Sapmaz, 2013) that it positively correlates with the psychological well-being – another important personality construct, describing, in the first

rate, the eudaimonic aspects of human functioning, manifested in maintaining positive relations with others, experiencing feelings of competence (ecological mastery), positive self-acceptance, having meaning and purpose in life (Ryff, 1989). It was also found out that high ratio of the positive vs. negative emotions in the individual evaluation of one's life experiences does not necessarily correlate with the *material* and *economic* indices of the quality of life. People in the underdeveloped countries are reported to experience the same average level of satisfaction with life as the people in the countries with the higher level of economic development. This peculiar paradox suggests that neither cognitive, nor affective components of the satisfaction with life are solely determined by the hedonic pleasurable experiences but rather reflect the eudaimonic perspective of the subjective well-being. The latter can be caused by the positive prosocial emotions, related to the self-fulfillment of the individual and his/her adequately high level of self-esteem as a consequence of satisfaction with oneself as an *agent* of the purposeful activity. This effect was observed in the studies of the emotional burnout of teachers in the countries with different levels of economic development. The burnout appeared to be moderated by the level of satisfaction of the teacher with oneself as an agent of professional activity (Grysenko & Nosenko, 2012), rather than by the level of salary or of other situational factors.

The practical significance of this type of research is evident. Until recently, researchers claimed that *genetic factors* have a 40 to 50 % effect on happiness (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996), whereas the precursors of the remaining 50% of possible between-person differences remained practically undefined, since the demographic factors, studied in this context (life conditions, age, gender, education level, marital status and the like) appeared to have only up to 10% effect on happiness (Dogan, Totan & Sapmaz, 2013). Recently there appeared one more new line of research in personality differences which is likely to help fill in the gap in studying the determinants of the subjective well-being. One of the keynote speakers at the 28th Conference of EHPS (Bordeaux, France, July, 2013), Lutz Yankie in his lecture entitled "Brain, Cognition, Self-Regulation and Health" claimed, with reference to the new empirical data, that an efficacious self-regulation manifested in the form of goal-setting, decision-making, planning of one's own purposeful behavior and using the appropriate forms and strategies of coping, is beneficial for the individual's health, both mental and physical. The participation in this conference encouraged the authors of this article to analyze the empirical findings, obtained by one of the co-authors of this paper Dina Nosenko in course of working on her MA thesis, to highlight the role of the individually preferred coping strategies and forms of coping behavior in the individual's subjective well-being and mental health.

We ascribed a particular significance for the subjective well-being to the habitual choice by the individuals of two different forms of proactive coping: a constructive one (Greenglass, 1998; Schwarzer & Taubert, 2002) and a non-constructive one, manifested by the phenomenon of *self-handicapping* (Colman, 2009, p.682) and substantiated the possibility of viewing the individually preferred forms and strategies of coping behavior as a consequential outcomes of a hierarchically arranged system of the personality resources.

Substantiation of the subject-matter of this research and its methodology

An alternative strategy for personality science in determining individual differences

In the new SAGE edition of the Handbook of Personality Theories and Assessment (Boyle, Matthews, Saklofske, Eds, 2008), alongside with the classical structural approach to the study of personality factors determining the individual differences in behavior, *alternative strategy for personality science* has been highlighted. While the dispositional approach to studying individual differences in personality functioning represented by the stable traits like the Big Five, can best explain between-person differences in a comparatively limited number of everyday situations, the within-person causal dynamic is claimed to be best tapped (Cervone, 2008; Campbell, 2005), by the personality constructs, formed on the borderline

between the *personality* and *abilities* (like emotional intelligence); *personality and values*, like the so-called character strengths, identified by positive psychologists (Peterson & Seligman, 2004); *personality and self-regulation*, like individually preferred coping strategies or specific adaptations (Parker & Wood, 2008). The latter (coping strategies and forms of coping behavior) were chosen as the subject-matter of this paper for the following reasons.

The subjective well-being has not yet been sufficiently investigated as a possible outcome of the efficacious coping behavior, moreover the new type of the specific adaptations – the *proactive coping* (with different forms of its manifestation, like: preventive coping, strategic coping, seeking emotional or instrumental support, etc.) has been identified (Greenglass,1998 ;Schwarzer & Taubert,2002). All the forms of the proactive coping are characterized as “constructive”. We have chosen for this research as their non-constructive opposite form of proactive coping the construct of *self-handicapping*) (Feick & Rhodewalt,1997), which is interpreted as “imposing an obstacle to one’s successful performance in a particular situation in order to provide an excuse for failure (usually in a person of low self-esteem)” (A. Colman, 2009, p.682). Self-handicapping has been studied before as a motivational strategy to investigate the “sensitive ego”.

The significance of studying different forms and strategies of coping behavior in the context of their role in determining the subjective well-being of the individual is determined not only by their role in dealing with stressful situation, but also by the likely possibility to use the information about the relative frequency of using particular types of coping behavior for the implicit personality diagnostics, since coping behavior lets itself for overt observation in the real life settings. So, this line of research is likely to open up new vistas for developing post – non classical methodology in personality research in psychology.

Since self-regulation has been claimed in the introduction to this paper to be a likely personality-mediated precursor of mental and physical health, the investigation of the frequency of resorting by the individual to the proactive coping strategies might cast new light on studying the *agentic activity* of the individual which might characterize the high level of self-evolution.

The research questions set forth for empirical study, presented in this paper, were formulated as follows.

1. Is there a *hierarchy* of the personality precursors of the subjective well-being and can it be revealed through the preferred forms and strategies of coping behavior used by the individuals with different levels of subjective well-being?
2. If the hierarchy of the personality precursors of the effective self-regulation exists, will the personality constructs of ego-identity and ego-involvement be predictive of using more constructive types of coping?
3. Will the differences in the hypothesized personality precursors of self-regulation be manifested in different levels of probability of using constructive proactive coping behavior vs. self-handicapping?

Hierarchical structural model of the personality-mediated differences in coping behavior

The preliminary answers to the questions of the empirical research, the results of which are summed up in this paper, have been presented in the hierarchical structural model of the personality-mediated differences in coping behavior, developed by the authors. The model accounts for the individual differences in the *evaluation of the situations* which call for the decision making as to the choice of the coping efforts at three levels: 1. *Primary* (affective) appraisal of the situation; 2. The *cognitive* evaluation by the individual of the available coping resources; 3. The *generalized appraisal* of the situation and oneself as an agent of coping behavior.

The *primary* evaluation of the situation, which calls for coping efforts, can result in perception of it either as a *threat* or as a *challenge*. The personality precursors of the choice of the forms and strategies of coping behavior on the *primary (affective)* stage are determined by the dispositional traits, primarily by genetic factors. Emotional stability and extraversion are likely to be precursors of the perception of the situation as a *challenge* while neuroticism- as a *threat*.

The likely personality precursors of the *cognitive appraisal* of available coping resources are *ego-identity*, manifested by high vs. low levels of self-esteem and belief in self-efficacy and ego-involvement, manifested by dispositional characteristics of personality self-evolution as appraised in terms of available resources, mechanisms and levels of involvement (Kusikova, 2012). High levels of self-esteem, belief in self-efficacy and self-evolution result in cognitive appraisal of resources as sufficient and in orientation to their active use. Low levels of self-esteem and belief in self-efficacy, and orientation of the coping behavior to the defense of one's sensitive ego result in cognitive appraisal of resources as insufficient and using non constructive proactive coping to defend one's sensitive ego. It is hypothesized, thus, that constructive proactive coping strategies will be pertinent to the individuals with high level of ego-involvement and positive ego-identity, and whereas individuals with low level of ego-involvement and negative ego-identity will resort to self-handicapping as a non constructive proactive coping will be used the individual's sensitive ego.

The above described hierarchical structural model includes also the *generalized level of appraisal of oneself as an agent of coping behavior*. If the appraisal is positive the individuals are expected to experience subjective well-being, operationalized in this research in terms of satisfaction with life and mental health continuum, and likelihood of using the wide variety of constructive proactive coping strategies is high. In case of the negative generalized appraisal of oneself as an agent of coping, the low level of subjective well-being and mental health continuum are expected. The likely forms of coping behavior include non constructive proactive coping, manifested in terms of self-handicapping and counterfactual thinking.

The hypothesized forms and strategies of coping behavior are identified in the developed model as follows: if the situation is perceived on the *primary (affective)* level as a *challenge*, the likely coping strategy is the problem-focused one. If the situation is perceived as a *threat* the coping the tendency for avoidance is demonstrated. At the level of *cognitive evaluation* of available coping resources, the problem-focused coping signals the availability of resources and the positive *ego-identity*, and the emotion-focused coping is associated with insufficiency of resources and negative *ego-identity*. At this level of *cognitive appraisal of resources*, the proactive constructive coping strategies (preventive, strategic, reflexive and others) are likely to be resorted to by the individuals who have sufficient resources. If the individuals perceive their resources as insufficient and have a sensitive ego, the likely coping strategies they will resort to are emotion-focused coping and non constructive proactive coping conceptualized in the form self-handicapping.

The suggested model is hierarchically arranged from top to bottom, which means that we ascribe more significance in determining the differences in coping behavior to personality precursors of the second and third levels, namely levels describing self-authenticity of the individuals (ego-identity and ego-involvement). To test the psychological reality and expediency of the model in empirical research was carried out.

Method

Participants

The sample included 64 participants, aged 18-21 (mean age 19 years 6 months), undergraduate students of Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University, currently continuing their education during the 2013-2014 academic year. Of the participants, 62.5 % (n=40) are female and 37.5 % (n=24) are male. Participation in the empirical study was a part

of their course work for which students were supposed to get credit after completing the course.

Materials

Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS)

The Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations was used to measure task -, emotion -, and avoidance-oriented coping strategies (Endler & Parker, 1990; adapted to the Ukrainian culture in 2004 by Krukova). The measure consists of 46 items to which subjects respond on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – “strongly disagree”, to 7 – “strongly agree”. The stem question requests that individuals rate how much they engage in each activity when they encounter difficult, stressful or upsetting situations. Sample items for the respective subscales include: task-oriented coping, “Think about how I solved similar problems”; emotion-oriented coping, “Blame myself for not knowing what to do”; and avoidance-oriented coping, “Watch TV; call a friend”. Reliability and validity estimates for the Ukrainian adaptation of CISS provide support for internal consistency of all the scales. Cronbach $\alpha = .876$ for the whole inventory, $\alpha = .853$ for the problem-focused coping; $\alpha = .877$ for emotion-focused coping and $\alpha = .814$ for the avoidance coping.

Proactive Coping Inventory (PCI)

PCI consists of 6 subscales, 55 items total (Greenglass & Schwartz & Taubert, 1998, adapted to the Ukrainian culture by E.Starchenkova, 2002). The six subscales of the Ukrainian adapted version of PCI are: The Proactive Coping Scale, the Reflective Coping Scale, Strategic Planning, Preventive Coping, Instrumental Support Seeking, and Emotional Support Seeking. The subjects are asked to evaluate the degree of agreement with the following statements on a 4-point scale, from 1 - "totally disagree" to 4- "totally agree". The authors note that in case of shortage of time, The Proactive Coping Scale can be used as the single independent measure. The Proactive Coping Scale combines autonomous goal setting with self-regulatory goal attainment cognitions and behavior (Greenglass, 1998). The scale has high internal consistency, Cronbach $\alpha = .85$. The Reflective Coping Scale consists of 11 items and includes contemplating about various behavioral alternatives, brainstorming, analyzing problems and resources, etc. The Reflective Coping Scale has internal consistency as seen in Cronbach $\alpha = .79$. Strategic planning subscale comprises of 4 items and focuses on breaking extensive tasks into manageable components as well as generating goal-oriented schedule of action. This scale has acceptable reliability, $\alpha = .71$. Preventive Coping deals with anticipation of possible stressors and initiation the preparation before stressors develop fully. The 10-item Preventive Coping Scale correlates positively with another measure of Preventive Coping (Peacock & Wong, 1990), with Internal Control, Active Coping, Planning and Acceptance. Instrumental Support Seeking combines seeking of assistance, information or advice about what to do and the greater the seeking of empathy from others. Finally, Emotional Support Seeking 5-item subscale deals with seeking the advice and empathy from others.

Self-handicapping Scale

The Self-Handicapping Scale is comprised of 25 statements designed to assess an individual's proclivity to display self-handicapping behavior. For each statement, subjects were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a six-point scale. Large group testing sessions indicate that the scale exhibits acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .79) and test-retest reliability ($r = .74$ after one month). The predictive ability of the scale is confirmed by a number of studies (Feick & Rhodewalt, 1997). The instrument was translated into Ukrainian for the first time by an experienced researcher with a first degree in translation and then checked by the research team, who were fluent in both English and Ukrainian. Care

was taken to ensure each item translated retained a meaning as close as possible to the original version by means of a back translation process.

NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI)

NEO Five-Factor Inventory (Costa et al., 1992, adapted by V. Orel) is a 60-item inventory, comprising questionnaires for measuring the Big Five personality factors. Participants in our study rated 60 behavior-descriptive statements on 7-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), indicating the degree to which they thought the items were characteristic of them. The NEO-FFI is one of the most widely used measurement tools of the Big Five and has very strong psychometric properties. Six-year test-retest reliability has ranges from .63 to .82. For the NEO FFI (the 60-domain-only version), the internal consistencies were: for neuroticism $\alpha=.79$; extraversion $\alpha=.79$; openness to the new experience $\alpha=.68$; agreeableness $\alpha=.75$; conscientiousness $\alpha=.83$. Adapted version Cronbach alphas reliabilities were reported as follows: E = .76, N = .63, O = .75, C=.73, A=.79.

The Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS)

The Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson et al., 1988, adapted to Ukrainian culture in 2012 by E.Osin) intended to assess general positive and negative affect. The scale is comprised of 2 subscales measuring positive and negative affect respectively. PANAS is composed of 20 adjectives describing different feelings and emotions. Subjects are asked to read each adjective and mark how often he or she felt this way in the past few weeks, on a 5-point Likert from 1 – “almost never” to 5 – “very strongly”. Internal consistencies as seen in Cronbach alpha are: for positive affect =.89, and for negative affect = .86.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The 7-point Likert scale that has been developed by Diener et al. (1985) and adapted into Ukrainian culture by D. Leontiev and E.Osin (2008) contains five items. The internal consistency (Cronbach α) and test-re-test coefficient of the adapted version of the scale is .75 and .70 respectively.

Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF)

MHC-SF, designed by Keyes (2006) is composed of 14 items and provides measures of subjective well-being, psychological well-being and social well-being. We used our own translation into the Ukrainian language without adaptation (as allowed by the author, if the scale is used for research). The short form has shown good internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha=.80$) and discriminatory validity. Test-re-test reliability estimates range from .57 to .82 for the total scale. The three factor structure of the short form - emotional, psychological, and social well-being – has been confirmed in American representative samples (Keyes, 2006).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

For measuring global self-esteem Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) was used. The scale consists of 10 items, responses being measured on 4-point scale, from 1- “strongly disagree” to 4-“strongly agree”. Cronbach α reliabilities for the RSE are reported from .72 to .88.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)

The General Self-Efficacy Scale is a 10-item psychometric scale that is designed to assess optimistic self-beliefs to cope with a variety of difficult demands in life. The scale has been originally developed in German by M.Jerusalem and R. Schwarzer in 1981 and adapted to the

Ukrainian culture by V.Romek in 1996. During adaptation study single general factor was confirmed and internal consistency coefficient was reported as $\alpha=.847$.

Dispositional Characteristics of Personality Self-Evolution

To assess individual's awareness of oneself as an agent of self-evolution, we used a new Ukrainian thought-out inventory "Dispositional Characteristics of Personality Self-Evolution" (Kusikova, 2012). The Inventory consists of 30 statements rated on a five-point Likert Scale (with 5- "very much like me" and 1- "not like me at all"). The statements are formulated like: "I believe in my potential abilities and strive to self-actualization"; "I enjoy doing things that require maximum commitment and efforts"; or "In my life I am guided by the ideals of the truthfulness, goodness and beauty" etc. The Inventory has 3 scales. The meaning of the first scale is described by the author (Kusikova, 2012) as the awareness of the individual in the necessity of self-growth, self-evolution; openness to changes, interest in the events of the surrounding world; interest in one's own inner world. The meaning of the second scale "Conditions of self-evolution" is defined in the terms of autonomy, positive self-perception, strength and maturity of the self-image; awareness of one's goals, active life strategies. The meaning of the third scale "Mechanisms (functional means) of self-evolution" is defined in terms of self-comprehension (strive to authenticity); self-reflection (self-analysis)' awareness of the discrepancies between the real and the ideal self; sensitivity to the feedback from other people. The author reports internal consistency of the Inventory $\alpha=.70$

Procedure

The research data was acquired from the students at Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University during 2012-2013 academic year. The participants of the research were included in the study following a short brief about the research and then were asked to fill in suggested questionnaires individually and provide their demographic details to the authors of this research. The analysis of the data was carried out via IBM PAWS SPSS 18. Three types of research procedures have been carried out: the correlational analysis (r-Pearson product moment correlation coefficients) were assessed among all the variables included in the hypothesis; factor analysis (the method of independent components with Varimax rotation) was carried out to identify the variables with eigenvalue exceeding 1; and cluster analysis (k-means algorithm) was performed as a part of a quasi-experiment to identify subgroups of subjects with differences in their personality variables, differences between cluster means being assessed with t-test.

Findings

In the hypothesis hierarchical model that was formed to explain a mediating effect of the personality authenticity variables on the efficacy of self-regulation and subjective well-being as a consequential outcome it was put forward that there were significant relationships between neuroticism, self-esteem, belief in self-efficacy, level of self-evolution and the self-regulation efficacy as dependent variables mediating their effect on the subjective well-being.

As a result of the *correlational analysis* it was determined that there were significant relationships between all the variables in the model, supporting the hypothesis (see Table 1).

Table 1. Relationship coefficients between the dependent (Self-regulation efficiency) and independent (personality authenticity) variables.

Hypothesized dependent variables of Self-Regulation (coping strategies)	Hypothesized independent personality variables of self-authenticity								
	Neuroticism	Self-Esteem	Belief in Self-Efficacy	Dispositional self-evolution resources	Needs of dispositional self-evolution	Conditions of dispositional self-evolution	Mechanisms of dispositional self-evolution	Subjective well-being	Mental Health Continuum
Problem focused	-.144	.068	.477**	.562**	.215	.554**	.391**	.344**	.173
Emotion-focused	.513**	-.299*	-.486**	-.214	-.345**	-.269*	.240	.089	-.267*
Avoidance	-.039	-.062	.112	.019	-.131	-.037	.249*	.172	-.053
Distraction	.027	-.095	-.135	-.216	-.318*	-.268*	.203	.076	-.302*
Seeking social support	-.028	.183	.213	.224	.120	.149	.209	.176	.096
Proactive	-.396**	.165	.480**	.316**	.193	.390**	.034	.249*	.205
Reflexive	-.202	-.114	.365**	.279*	-.122	.371*	.345**	.128	.131
Strategic	-.140	-.079	.451**	.180	-.006	.240	.135	.092	.248*
Preventive	-.040	-.116	.300*	-.010	-.196	.146	.071	.191	.321*
Seeking of emotional support	.110	-.048	.016	.276*	.010	.194	.408**	.163	.109
Seeking of instrumental support	.064	.288*	.329**	.336**	.179	.341**	.163	.138	.300*
Self-handicapping	.240	-.304*	-.452**	-.182	-.184	-.285*	.146	-.084	-.251*

*p≤.05

**p≤.01

The analysis of the correlation data has confirmed the hypothesized significance of the effect of the personality characteristics for the self-regulation efficacy.

1. As shown in Table 1, the probability of the choice of the most efficacious of the coping strategies identified by Endler and Parker (Endler & Parker, 1999) – problem-focused one, statistically significantly correlates with 6 of 9 personality variables, including subjective well-being, besides all of these correlations are positive. The least efficacious coping strategy, the emotion-focused one, statistically significantly negatively correlates with five personality variables, including mental health continuum. The sixth significant correlation, which is positive, is registered with a genetically determined factor of neuroticism.

2. The correlational analysis has also proved the probability of the hierarchical nature of relationship between personality variables and the self-regulation efficacy. The higher are the values of the linear correlation coefficients, the higher is the level of the positive self-authenticity as the personality factor. For example, while the negative correlation coefficient of the most effective self-regulative coping strategy –the problem-focused one with “neuroticism” does not reach the level of significance $r = -.114$, the correlations are positive and significant for “belief in self-efficacy” ($r = .477$, $p \leq .01$), and for the level of the self-

evolution ($r=.562$, $p\leq.01$). These findings cast some new light on the known statement that “biology is not always a destiny”.

3. Two significant negative correlations of the mental health continuum with the emotion-focused coping ($r=-.267$, $p\leq.05$) and distraction ($r=-.302$, $p\leq.05$) also confirm the hypothetic model of the personality mediation of the subjective well-being.

4. Moreover, proactive forms of coping most vividly illustrate the role of personality factors in determining self-regulation. Six out of seven forms of proactive coping significantly correlate with the belief in self-efficacy and with the level self-evolution. This proves the significance of personality factors of higher levels of hierarchy in determining the choice of coping behavior. While the level of neuroticism negatively correlates only with one form of proactive coping, the belief in self-efficacy and the level of self involvement have ten positive correlations with different constructive proactive coping strategies. This data prove the expediency and psychological reality of the suggested hierarchical model of relationship between personality and self-regulation. The results of the research confirmed the relevance of choice of self-handicapping as a non-constructive coping-strategy. As shown in Table 1, it negatively correlates with self-esteem, belief in self-efficacy, conditions of self-development and mental health continuum.

5. The analysis of correlations of the personality variables with self-regulation efficacy related to the use of the constructive proactive forms of coping behavior and the non constructive form of proactive coping, which we ascribed to self-handicapping, have showed that proactive coping negatively correlates with neuroticism ($r=-.396$, $p\leq.01$) and positively correlates with belief in self-efficacy ($r=.480$, $p\leq.01$), dispositional self-evolution resources ($r=.316$, $p\leq.01$), conditions of dispositional self-evolution ($r=.390$, $p\leq.01$), subjective well-being ($r=.249$, $p\leq.05$) and mental health continuum.

With the help of the *factor analysis*, it has been found out that there were three factors which characterized the personality precursors of the choice of different forms and strategies of coping behavior. The first component (factor) named *personality precursors mediating the avoidance of the non-constructive coping behavior* included negative correlations with emotion-focused coping ($r=-.664$), self-handicapping ($r=-.573$), and positive correlations with a constructive forms of proactive coping ($r=.521$). The personality precursors included in this factor are: belief in self-efficacy ($r=.778$), adequate self-esteem ($r=.684$), striving for self fulfillment ($r=.641$), mental health continuum ($r=.603$), low negative neuroticism ($r=-.589$).

The distinguishing feature of the second factor, identified by the factor analysis, was that it included highly significant intercorrelations of the problem-focused coping strategy, localized both in present and future time, namely: a problem-focused coping ($r=.596$), strategic proactive coping ($r=.556$), and preventive proactive coping ($r=.547$). So, this factor was named as *personality precursors of the constructive psychological coping*. The list of these precursors includes three of five global dispositional personality traits: agreeableness($r=.710$), openness to experience ($r=.614$), subjective well-being ($r=.614$) and the dispositional mechanisms of self-evolution ($r=.501$), which include: striving to self-authenticity, self-reflection, awareness of the distance between real and ideal self, responsiveness to the feedback, the ability of self-regulation and self-growth (Kusikova,2012).

This structure of the intercorrelational links suggests that in order to ascribe the priority to the problem-focused coping strategy, the individual is supposed to be aware of the availability in one's experience of the appropriate coping resources.

The third factor is characterized by a vividly expressed tendency to avoiding any coping efforts whatsoever. The personality precursor of this tendency seems to be represented only by the mechanisms of dispositional self-evolution.

On the basis of factor analysis, the sample of participants was *clustered* (K-means algorithm) into 3 subgroups. The comparison of the coping strategies and the forms of coping

behavior, pertinent to the representatives of the “best” cluster, has shown that they differ from those of the second and third clusters by the higher level of the problem-focused coping, and the lower level of self-handicapping. Besides, they have statistically higher level of the subjective well-being ($t=2.97$) and mental health continuum ($t=4.05$). They possess adequately high self-esteem, the highest in the sample belief in self-efficacy, i.e. positive self-identity and the highest in the sample index of the dispositional characteristics of self-evolution (ego-involvement). Besides, the cluster analysis revealed that ego-identity and ego-involvement characteristics have higher t-values than neuroticism. Thus, all the hypotheses of the research have been confirmed.

Conclusion

The research findings allowed to form a hierarchical model of the personality-mediated differences in coping behavior as precursors of subjective well-being. The major findings of the study can be summed up as follows.

1. The individuals with low level of neuroticism are prone to choose problem-focused coping strategy on the stage of the primary (affective) appraisal of the situation.
2. The positive ego-identity (high self-esteem and belief in self-efficacy) can be claimed to determine the choice of both: the problem-focused coping strategy and constructive forms of proactive coping (localized in the future).
3. The high level of ego-involvement and inadequately high or low levels of self-esteem stimulate the appearance of non constructive proactive coping, localized in the future (i.e. self-handicapping).
4. The higher are the levels of the subjective well-being and mental health continuum, as the indicators of the generalized appraisal of the life situation and oneself as an agent of activity, the more diverse is the repertoire of the constructive coping strategies and forms of proactive coping behavior
5. The phenomenon of self-handicapping can be claimed to be not only a motivational strategy but also a form of non constructive coping behavior, as the subjects with high level of ego-involvement and ego-identity had the lowest levels of the tendency to resort to self-handicapping, and, vice versa, the subjects with low levels of ego-involvement and ego-identity frequently resort to self-handicapping. The latter proves the status of self-handicapping as a non constructive form of proactive coping behavior.

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