

# Resilience And Features Of Coping With Difficulties During The Adaptation Period Of First-Year Students

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## Abstract

The article is devoted to the problem of adaptation of students to study at a university. The components of resilience – involvement, control, risk-taking, as well as coping strategies of first-year students are studied. The author's view on the concept of "coping behavior of students in the conditions of adaptation to the university" is presented. The features of resilience and coping behavior of students with a low and high level of adaptation to the study group, as well as with a low and high level of adaptation to educational activity are considered. The correlation between the dependence of resilience and coping behavior on the level of adaptation is established. The results of the empirical study allow authors to conclude that coping strategies focused on solving the problem and social distraction, combined with a high level of resilience, help to adapt faster and more effectively to the new conditions of an educational institution and a new team.

The main methods by which the research was carried out are theoretical (analysis, generalization, classification; study of psychological and pedagogical literature); empirical (observation, method of fixing empirical data, method of statistical data processing, testing, as well as interpretation of the inner world of a person). The results of the work may be of interest to teachers, psychologists and used in the framework of psychological counseling of students.

**Keywords:** social adaptation, adaptation of students to the study group, adaptation of students to educational activities, resilience, coping behavior.

## Introduction

For the first time, the concept of "adaptation" arose in the framework of physiology as a process of adaptation of human sensory organs to the action of an irritant. In the future, the problem of adaptation became of interest to other branches of knowledge, including psychology (A.A. Rean, A.N. Leontiev, A.R. Kudashev, K.A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, V.P. Dyachenko, V.I. Lebedev, etc.) [1, 4, 6]. The subject of study on the latter are psychological adaptation mechanisms that help a person cope with their difficulties, increase productivity and maintain balance.

Within the framework of the problem under consideration, we are interested in social adaptation, which is understood as the process and result of a person's entry into a new social space.

For every first-year student, studying at the university marks a new stage in his life and activity and is associated with new conditions to which he or she must adapt.

The beginning of studies is, firstly, adaptation to the student group, the development of a new social role of the "student", the formation of mutual relations in the team. Hence the desire for self-affirmation, self-realization, leadership, they can cause inadequate reactions.

Secondly, it is entering a new social environment filled with new requirements, norms, a system of rules, following which is a necessary condition for the professional development of a student and allows to lead to the success of learning and personal development.

Thirdly, these are new conditions of everyday life, independent life away from parents, which requires the manifestation of organization and economic skills [2].

## Main challenges during the adaptation period of first-year students

Important characteristics of educational activity that cause difficulties of adaptation are: not the ability to process a large flow of new information;

lack of skills of independent organization of educational work, decision-making and problem-solving skills; inability to plan and allocate their time; a low level of relationship culture. All these factors lead to emotional tension and cause stress reactions.

An important role in the occurrence of stressful situations that cause the need for adaptive restructuring is played by such a quality of personality as resilience. With insufficient life—the emergence of apathy and a decrease in work capacity, or vice versa, a state of high tension, is very likely to persist in a difficult learning situation.

**Resilience** (hardiness is a term coined by S. Cobais and S. Maddi in the 80s of the twentieth century) characterizes the measure of a person's ability to survive a stressful situation, maintaining internal balance and not reducing the success of activity [3, 9].

Resilience allows you to transform negative impressions, stressful effects into new opportunities.

Salvatore Maddi identifies three components of resilience:

1. Engagement. It shows that a person is less susceptible to stress if he actively participates in the life of society, in various university events, etc., than someone who sits on the sidelines and watches everything that happens.

2. Control. One of the important components of resilience. It is necessary to be able to control your actions, emotions, feelings. Otherwise, a person risks losing his freedom, which can lead to a feeling of his own powerlessness.

3. Challenge or risk taking. It is important to understand that all our actions have a risk of failure, so we should not stop at the first failure, on the contrary, such cases make us better, give us invaluable experience. It is on the basis of some negative experience that we act more cautiously and more and more often achieve success.

Salvatore Maddi argues that the basis of resilience is to turn any stressful situation into an advantage, not to deny it and try to avoid it.

This is really important, because stressful situations and problems in the psycho-emotional sphere often lead to health problems, and vitality is the basis of a person's mental well-being. The level of resilience determines a person's ability to overcome stressful situations without much effort [9].

Resilience determines the overall level of resistance to stressful situations and spiritual stress. A person with a high level of resilience is less likely to be exposed to stressful situations than others. The study of behavior aimed at overcoming stressful situations in psychology is carried out within the framework of studies devoted to the analysis of "coping mechanisms" or "coping behavior".

To increase resilience, it is necessary to have a certain behavior that will contribute to the successful adaptation of a person to new difficult situations and cope with stressful factors. This behavior in psychology was called "coping" or coping. Co-owning behavior is considered as a combination of conscious concrete actions aimed at solving the problem and transforming the situation in accordance with one's intentions or accepting this situation if a person is unable to change it [8].

The concept of coping is considered not only within the framework of overcoming extreme situations, but has also been successfully applied to describe the behavior of people at turning points in life, and then - in conditions of chronic stressors and everyday reality [7].

A number of researchers note the most effective strategies of behavior in difficult situations. Thus, R. Lazarus and S. Folkman talk about the necessity of the manifestation of volitional efforts and the originality of a decision from a person in a difficult life situation [8].

To cope with the demands of a difficult situation, a person undertakes cognitive and behavioral efforts. K. Muzdybaev focuses on the success of solving a difficult situation, and the task of the individual is to overcome the difficulty, either to avoid it, or to reduce its negative consequences.

T.A. Wills and S. Shiffman distinguish

three stages of the coping process: preventive (a person evaluates difficulties), coping proper (direct implementation of cognitive and behavioral efforts to solve specific tasks) and restoring (reflection of the state, correlation of results and losses).

As for the effectiveness of a particular behavior strategy, there is no consensus among the authors. For example, R. Lazarus categorically opposes the allocation of good and bad strategies. The appropriateness of applying the strategy of overcoming will depend both on the individual characteristics of a person (psychological, gender, age, social), on the situations in which he finds himself, as well as on orientation to short-term or long-term prospects [8].

Hence, the authors' view within the framework of the study of coping behavior is defined by a new concept – "coping behavior of a student in the conditions of adaptation to the university", which assumes a purposeful choice of actions necessary for successful completion of the student's adaptation to the new social conditions at the university, including to educational activities and to the educational team.

In order to determine the dependence of students' resilience and coping characteristics on their level of adaptation, a psychological and pedagogical study was conducted on the basis of Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, in which 96 1st-year students of the Science faculty, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Faculty of Technology and Design, Faculty of Physics and Mathematics, Physical Education took part.

Empirical methods such as observation; testing; method of fixing empirical data; method of statistical data processing – Spearman's rank correlation criterion; interpretation of the inner world of a person were used.

To achieve the purpose of the study, we have chosen the following diagnostic methods:

1. "Coping behavior in stressful situations" (S. Norman, D.F. Edler, D.A. James, M.I. Parker).
2. "Test of resilience" (S. Maddi).

### **The study results allow us to draw the following conclusions:**

20% of students have a low level of adaptation to the study group. Such students do not feel comfortable and safe in the new team. They show restraint in their attitudes, as they believe that they may not be understood by their classmates. They do not separate the rules and traditions of the group. The students who follow the accepted norms and rules established in the group, are active in their relationships, make up 33%. They easily find a common language with the members of the group, can influence their opinions and views, taking into account their interests. Such students have a high level of adaptation to the study group. The average level of adaptation is observed in 47% of students.

17% of students have adapted to academic activities (a high level is noted). Interest and ease in mastering academic subjects are important components of their successful educational activities. They express a desire to participate in research activities, take part in seminars and round tables, speak at conferences. Their position is characterized by initiative and a desire to learn everything new. All independent training assignments are carried out on time.

23% of students have a harder time adapting to learning activities (they tend to have a low level). They cannot get used to new forms and methods of teaching, they are afraid of public speaking. The requirements that teachers have for mastering the discipline are perceived by such students as not strong.

60% of students have an average level of adaptation.

At the second stage of our study, we divided the students into 4 groups and examined the characteristics of resilience and coping behavior of each group. The first group included students who have a high level of adaptation to the study group; the second group included students with a low level of adaptation to the study group. In the third and fourth groups there are students with a high and low level of adaptation to educational

activities, respectively.

Next, we conducted a correlation analysis of the dependence of resilience and coping behavior on the level of adaptation. To process and interpret the data obtained, we used Spearman's rank correlation criterion.

A statistically significant moderate direct relationship ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) was found among students between a high level of adaptation to the study group and coping focused on social distraction; an average inverse correlation ( $r = -0.62$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) with coping focused on emotions. It follows from this that in the conditions of adaptation to the university, a first-year student is actively looking for social support in order to rely on someone's opinion, to find like-minded people. They are focused on the informational and emotional help of the surrounding people. They have expressed a desire to belong to a study group, participate in group activities. Such students are able to control their emotions, thoughts, are emotionally stable, ready to take responsibility for the events that occur, find acceptable options for the release of destructive emotions.

They are characterized by an average level of involvement, risk-taking and a high level of control, which determines a person's belief that everything that happens in life contributes to personal development, and their active behavior will bring much more benefit than passive. Students express their desire to participate in the life of the university- from the university, in the organization of various types of activities. Overcoming fear, they take actions to achieve high positive results.

The average direct relationship ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) was revealed in students between a low level of adaptation to the study group and coping focused on avoidance and emotions. They tend to shift the emphasis from solving the problem, analyzing it on recreation and entertainment. Internal tension, confusion and anxiety complement their passive position. A low level of involvement, an average level of control and risk-taking are expressed in feelings of their own helplessness, uncertainty and isolation, refusal of joint group actions.

They are sure that they do not have the ability to influence unexpected problems. At the same time, they have a lot of ideas and would like to implement them, but a sense of fear prevents them from doing so.

Students with a high level of adaptation to learning activities ( $r = 0.76$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) revealed a strong direct correlation with coping oriented to solving the problem.

The high level of involvement and the average level of control and risk-taking of students in this group indicate that they experience sincere joy from learning activities and, being in a position of active creative personality, they find a lot of valuable and useful things in each lesson, which helps them successfully overcome the stress associated with adaptation. Students are confident in themselves and in others, feel confidence in the world, and participate with interest in university events. They are characterized by predictability of behavior and planned actions.

There is a moderate direct correlation ( $r = 0.47$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) between a low level of adaptation to learning activities and coping focused on avoidance and distraction. Such students show low involvement in scientific, extracurricular activities. They are not interested in the learning process, or experiencing significant difficulties. They prefer to distance themselves from the problematic situation, to forget about it.

An average level of control and a low level of risk-taking do not allow students to take initiative, reflect thoughts, feelings, actions, identify and analyze the causes of difficulties in various aspects of their academic activities.

### Conclusion

Thus, adaptation poses tasks for students that can be solved by focusing on locus of coping on a problem situation, awareness of a person's own capabilities, reserves, self-control. To determine the final and intermediate goal, to outline a solution plan, to choose ways to achieve the goal - these are the key points of successful adaptation. Resilience helps to achieve a quick and effective entry into a new educational environment, into a new study

group, to make a decision in a situation of uncertainty.

According to empirical research, a high level of adaptation positively correlates with coping strategies focused on problem solving, social distraction; a negative relationship can be traced with emotion-oriented behavior. In addition, a high level of adaptation is characterized by medium and high levels of involvement, risk-taking and control.

A low level of adaptation is associated with avoidance and distraction from solving a problem situation, the predominance of negative emotional states, as well as with low and medium levels of involvement, risk-taking and control.

The ability to use one's internal resources and the development of skills of accessing external resources contributes to the expansion of the range of comprehension, mastering by the student of coping behavior necessary for successful adaptation in a higher educational institution.

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