



<https://doi.org/10.28925/2664-2069.2019.2.5>

УДК: 159.923.33

ASSESSMENT OF SITUATIVE COPING AS COMPONENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH OF SPORTS ACADEMIES STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DURING EXAMINATION PERIOD

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Author contribution: A – study design; B – data collection;
C – statistical inference; D – manuscript production.

Abstract

Aim is to determine priority coping strategies among third- and fifth-year students studying at sports academies education programs before examinations, in their course and after their ending.

Materials. In the research, third- and fifth-year students of the Faculty of Health, Physical Education and Sports were involved agreeing to conduct psychological testing. The age bracket of the individuals tested: 19 – 23. The number of individuals tested – 80. C.S. Carver «Questionnaire of assessing coping strategies» was implemented.

Results. The data was provided by results of testing on the following scales: active coping, planning, seeking social support for instrumental reasons, seeking social support for emotional reasons, suppression of competing activity, turning to religion, positive reinterpretation and growth, restraint, acceptance, focus on and venting of emotions, denial, mental disengagement, behavioral disengagement, alcohol-drug disengagement, humor.

Conclusions. Among the third-year students active coping, search of societal support, and planning prevail, and among fifth-year students these are turning to religion, positive interpreting and growth.

Keywords: situational coping, coping strategy, student, behavioral strategies.

Introduction

Stress is an integral part of today's human life. Thanks to that accommodation of a person to the environment is carried out which takes place due to universal set of neurohumoral reactions. Still, today's comprehension of stress theory has departed from solely biological one, and is of a multidisciplinary nature. Consequently, for today's psychology the issue of stress and investigation of its specificity, role and consequences for different spheres of human life is relevant. In this context, both higher education sphere, and students specifically call for particular attention. This category combining contingent of people of different age possible to differentiate due to the level of intellectual abilities, personal peculiarities, social position, and age criterion is

such giving in to different kinds of stress (emotional, intellectual, physiological) the most [6, 7, 10].

As Y. Shcherbatykh and A. Faustov note, students' learning activities have a range of specific peculiarities inherent for this type of mental activities only, such as: simultaneous observation of several processes changing in time, or studying lots of subjects in a short period of time; systematic and rapid shifting from one object or item to another, constant readaptation; perception and processing of various information in great amounts often having emotional nature; serious lack of time for processing this information and for making important decisions; sense of increased responsibility for decisions made, and rapid emerging of mental stress state; completing a great amount of work at evening



and night time; lack of motor analyzer apparatus involvement [5].

As O.M. Turchak notes, all these factors alone can cause mental overload among students, and lead to emotional stress situation. As a result, students' working capacity decreases affecting their grades. That is why investigation of the nature of emotional stress emerging during students' studies is necessary, particularly, the situations causing it [17].

Educational or academic stresses among students were investigated by S. Agarwal, L. Cheng, L. Cohen, G. D. Marshall, Q. Wei, P. Wong, B. Ananiev, D. Andrieieva, V. Bodrov, O. Bondarenko, O. Vares, N. Horst and V. Horst, I. Yesaulenko, L. Kytaiev-Smyk, L. Kovaliova, M. Kovrova, B. Kohan, I. Korovaiko, N. Naienko, N. Peisakhov, M. Plekhanova, V. Ponomarenko, M. Rasulova, Y. Sosnovikova, O. Faustov, Y. Fedorova, V. Sharai, Y. Shcherbatykh, etc. It is known that stress is a natural reaction of a person to the situation of threat, danger, or discomfort. Its aim is to mobilize all resources of organism to overcome obstacles, solve problems, complete important tasks, and consequently provide successful adaptation to environmental conditions. Stress reactions help a person be accurate, concentrated, and show increased zeal, they allow involving all intellectual, emotional and volitional resources.

The period of getting higher education is one of the most stressful in human life, and the most stress-inducing factors of studies are for no doubt exams, final tests, and graduation paper presentations. That is why the examination period for most students is full of stresses of different nature, such as physiological (lack of sleep, headaches); informational (excessive pressure of information in different academic subjects), emotional and social (dissatisfaction with oneself compared to more successful groupmates). That is why we consider that investigation of factors allowing avoiding stresses during examinations is relevant and forward-looking.

Research objective is to determine priority coping strategies among third- and fifth-year students studying at sports academies education programs before examinations, in their course and after their ending.

Methods

Research was conducted based on Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University. In the research, third-

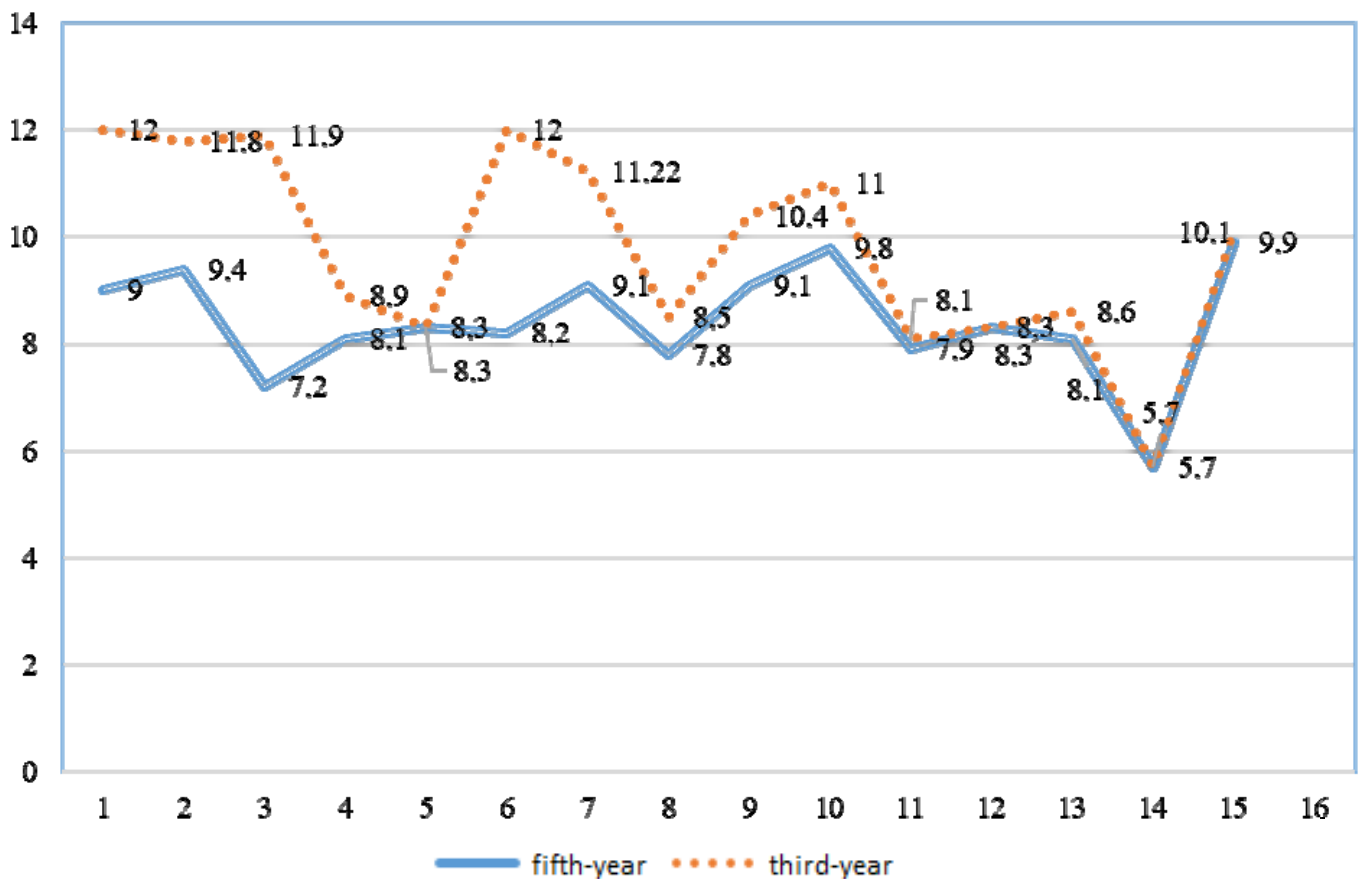
and fifth-year students of the Faculty of Health, Physical Education and Sports were involved agreeing to conduct psychological testing. The age bracket of the individuals tested: 19 – 23. The number of individuals tested – 80. C.S. Carver «Questionnaire of assessing coping strategies» (adopted by I. Dementii) was implemented. [17]. The results were processed according to the test key. Based on analysis of indicators, the comparative diagrams of the key coping strategies among third- and fifth-year students were made up.

Results

To assess situational coping (reaction to separate situation or reaction at a given time) that is to determine the behavior strategies chosen by students before, in the course of, and after the ending of assessment, the C.S. Carver «Questionnaire of assessing coping strategies» (adopted by I. Dementii) was implemented, including 15 scales: active coping (1), planning (2), seeking social support for instrumental reasons (3), seeking social support for emotional reasons (4), suppression of competing activity (5), turning to religion (6), positive reinterpretation and growth (7), restraint (8), acceptance (9), focus on and venting of emotions (10), denial (11), mental disengagement (12), behavioral disengagement (13), alcohol-drug disengagement (14), humor (15).

Being aware that specificity of situation can mostly determine the peculiarities of human behavior the starting point of our research was studying of social-situational context of harnessing through determination of content characteristics, range and level of stress inducement of assessment. Now let us refer to discussion of the results confirming «behavioral» similarity of assessment situations through analysis of peculiarities of strategies of their overcoming by the subject.

The results provided by means of the C.S. Carver «Questionnaire of assessing coping strategies» (adopted by I. Dementii) allow claiming that before examinations as prevailing coping strategies among third-year students there are active coping, search of societal support, and planning, and among fifth-year students there are turning to religion, focus on emotions, positive reinterpretation and growth (pic. 1) claiming age-specific pattern in using coping strategies.



Pic.1. Research findings according to the C.S. Carver «Questionnaire of assessing coping strategies» (before examinations)

The choice of coping depends on many factors. Firstly, it depends on personality of subject and peculiarities of situation determining coping behavior. Secondly, it depends on social, cultural, sexual and other peculiarities. From our perspective, the choice of these exact strategies as optimal is determined by peculiarities of exam situation. Thus, pre-examination period includes actions and operations aimed on searching necessary information, its awareness, and retaining which demands increased activity from the student as behavioral, so mental and cognitive.

Active coping is resulting from particular actions and efforts aimed to remove or avoid the source of stress. The focus on emotions aimed on temporary stress release emerging naturally in the period of intensive interaction with situation is distinguished by increased personal significance and stress inducement. Seeking social support for emotional reasons allows reducing exam anxiety and normalizing emotional state necessary for cognitive activity implementation due to

assistance, information or substantial advice from the people around.

High status of the positive reinterpretation and growth strategy chosen by the students can be connected with great experience of involvement in exam situations aimed in general to change the subject, their cognitive and behavioral development, and, as in most cases, resulting from the process of preparation to the exam and expectation of its results.

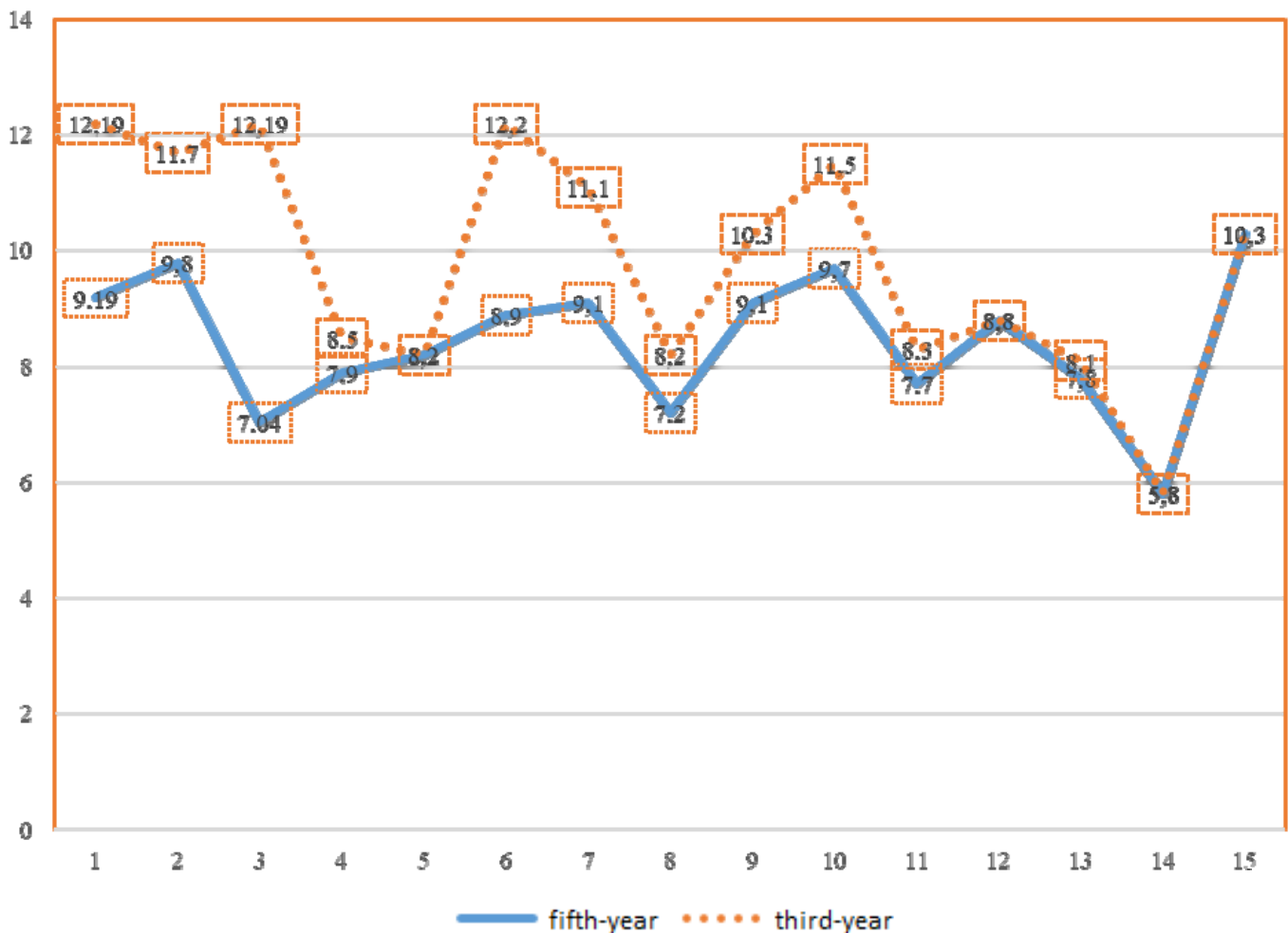
Turning to religion is aimed to avoid interaction with reality. It is supported by more active involvement in religious activity. Planning is thoughts about how to resist the source of stress; this is planning of tries of active coping. Quite strongly expressed among third- and fifth-year students is the strategy of using alcohol (37,5%). This is, unfortunately, extremely negative social change of nowadays but widely discussed in today's psychological literature.

During examinations the third- and fifth-year students use almost the same behavioral strategies



including pre-examination period, which means active coping, search of societal support, and planning among third-year students; turning to religion, focus on emotions, and positive reinterpretation and growth among fifth-year students. But, unlike pre-examination period, the level of indicators in the course of examinations has notably increased (+ 26%).

The third-year students implement more active behavioral strategies where they aim to use all existing personal resources to search possible ways of effective problem-solving; and fifth-year students choosing active behavioral strategies as well yet aimed to effective problem-solving by means of changes in themselves and on temporary stress release provoked by stress situation (pic. 2).

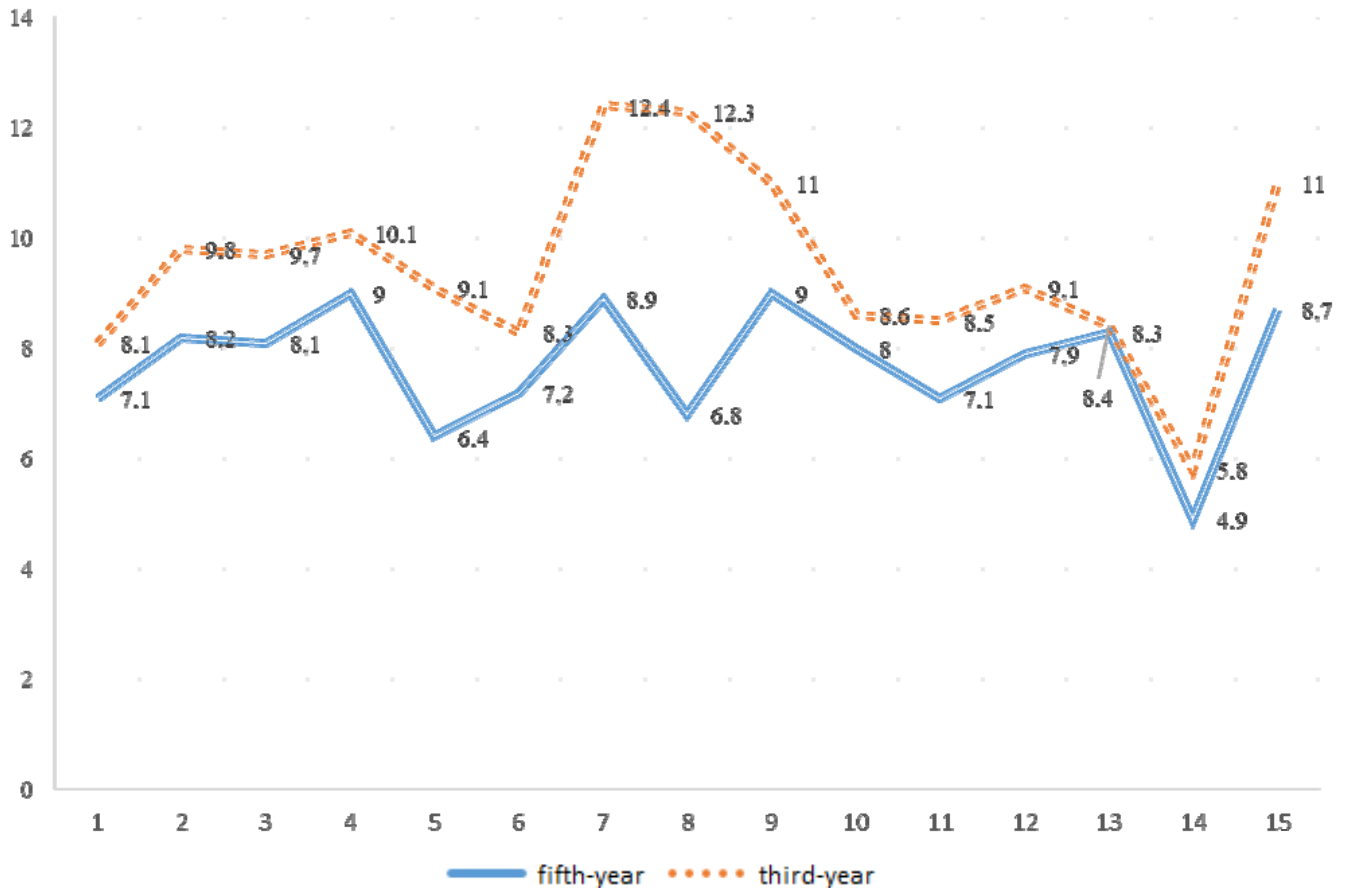


Pic 2. Research findings according to the C.S. Carver «Questionnaire of assessing coping strategies» (in the course of examinations)

Such choice of coping strategies can result from the fact that we investigate the situation and personality having already chosen a particular coping behavior and trying to adhere to it.

After examination period the individuals tested were choosing absolutely other strategies of behavior than before or in the course of examination period. The difference was in the level of expression of behavior strategies. Thus, the following strategies

were chosen: positive reinterpretation and growth (third-year students – 12,19, fifth-year students – 9, 19); restraint (third-year students – 12,19, fifth-year students – 7,04); acceptance (third-year students – 11,62, fifth-year students – 9,59). Such research findings can show that after the ending of examination period students of both third and fifth years find benefit in such situation through personal growth or observe it in more favorable light (pic. 3).



Pic.3. Research findings according to the C.S. Carver «Questionnaire of assessing coping strategies» (after examinations)

Consequently, we can claim that facing complicated situations a personality is oriented towards their solving using various strategies of coping behavior, such as active coping, positive reinterpretation and growth, seeking social support for instrumental reasons, strategy of behavioral restraint, rejection, and alcohol consumption.

Conclusions

Taking into account that examinations are a complicated stress inducing situation demanding mobilization of internal and external resources from students both for controlling the situation

itself and for accommodation to changes in organism and mental state resulting from exam stress, the students of the Faculty of Health, Physical Education and Sports have personal coping strategies helping them in such case. Among the third-year students active coping, search of societal support, and planning prevail, and among the fifth-year students these are turning to religion, focus on emotions, and positive reinterpretation and growth.

Conflict of interests. The authors claim no conflict of interests.

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Received: 05.06.2019;

Accepted 19.06.2019; Published: 28.06.2019.