STUDENTS' AND CADETS' COPING STRATEGIES IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THEIR FEAR AND ANXIETY

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Abstract

The article deals with the results of theoretical analysis and experimental research of the coping-strategies of students and cadets in the experience of their fear and anxiety. Its purpose is to describe the differences in the experiences of students and cadets fear and anxiety; determining the conditions of their using coping-strategies and protective mechanisms. The method-complex of five questionnaires has been applied: "The hierarchical structure of actual fears" by Y. Shcherbatykh, E.Ivleva; "Fear of exams"; anxiety by C. Spielberg; "Indicator of Copy-Strategies" by J. Amirkhan; Plucick-Kellermann-Conte' questionnaire. Methods of mathematical statistics are used to assess the reliability of the differences between the groups of comparison - by gender and form of education (students study at their own expense, cadets - for state registration). The sample consisted of 60 students and cadets of the ODUVS (a total of 120 people, including 50 girls and 70 boys). The research was conducted in March-June 2018.

The differences in the coping-strategies of cadets and students and gender differences were identified, the emphasis was placed on the need to understand stereotypical mechanisms of protection and reflection of behavioral reactions in difficult situations in order to increase the effectiveness of coping-strategies. Students and cadets, boys and girls do not react equally to threats, their fears, the level of anxiety, coping-strategies and protective mechanisms are different. Differences between fears among students, cadets and statistical norm based on the questionnaire "Hierarchical structure of actual fears" are revealed. Students and cadets with a high level of fear of exams show a high level of personal and situational anxiety by questionnaire of C.Spielberg. The experience of people consulting who feel discomfort due to over-measured fear and anxiety is summarized.

Keywords: fear, anxiety, protective mechanisms, coping-strategies.

Introduction

The idea of this study belongs to the students and cadets of the Odessa State University of Internal Affairs, who were the members of the psychological circle at the department of psychology and pedagogy and were interested in their own inner world, in particular, the reasons for them and the people of the same age their experiences of fear and anxiety. The concept of the research and the selection of methods, the organization of the entire study, their interpretation and the formulation of the conclusions have been made by the authors of the article.

The actuality of this research is due to the need for a new generation of lawyers, in particular police officers with their personal qualities, which are correspond to the mission of the profession - ready to serve the law and protect the rights and interests of citizens. It is about such personality qualities as honesty, principledness, decency, courage, self-reliance etc. (Yakovenko, 2014). These common to all mankind qualities should be

formed for all school-leavers even at school. It is not to be hoped that their absence can be compensated for during higher education or in the period of primary adaptation or administrative activity, which is often accompanied by professional deformation.

Thus, there is a need to improve the methods of professional-psychological selection of applicants, which will not be limited only to the statement of the absence of mental disorders and the availability of academic abilities, such psychological support for cadets and students in adapting to the conditions of study, which reduces the risk of professional deformation.

When communicating with students and cadets, the faculty and practical psychologists of the university often discuss students and cadets' negative mental states, in particular, the state of increased anxiety, caused by various fears, often fictitious, induced by surroundings. In some cases, in the combination of adverse circumstances, certain personal morbidities and lack of proper support from others, the students and cadets feel

the acute reactions of disadaptation that are likely to inadequate response to real or perceived threats to their well-being, honor or dignity.

The study of the fears of boys and girls shows their inherent instability and insecurity. They can be caused by, for example, "examination neurosis" or the fear "to lose face" or attachment of a significant person; on this background there are chronic conditions of anxiety, depression, the danger of inadequate, destructive acts.

The purpose of the article is to describe the peculiarities of students and cadets' experience of fears and anxieties and compare them among themselves, to determine the conditions of using coping-strategies and protective mechanisms by them in unfavourable situations, to share the experience of psychological counseling.

To achieve this purpose, we need to clarify which fears are most common for youth, find out whether they are related to gender, forms of learning, personal and situational anxiety, mechanisms of unconscious mental protection, or conscious coping-strategies.

The methodological basis of the research is the conceptual positions of philosophy, which are confined to human fears and anxieties, fundamental works on the psychology of emotions; applied researches of psychology of fear and their overcoming (Bibikova, 2003, Hall, 2004 et al.).

The experience of fear is studied by philosophers, physiologists, psychiatrists and psychotherapists, teachers, specialists in general, pedagogical, legal and social psychology and sociology, which testifies to the significance, complexity and multidimensionality of this phenomenon. The sources of personal fears are divided, according to E. Lichko (Lichko A.E., 1983), to the fears of elements, spatial, hippodern, social, mystical, neurotic fears. Children's fears later lose their strength, but new ones appear, for example, the fear of not passing the exam, cover with shame upon student-mates, parents, etc. (Askew, 2007; Bibikova, 2003; Creinina, 2005).

We regard fear as the subject of a real, imaginary or existential threat. This may be the fear of death as such, the fear of living, losing something valuable, children or night-time fears; the fear is generalized until phobia of phobias appears, the fear of concrete agents of influence (snakes, rats, spiders, dogs) at some point (fear of being killed by lightning during a thunderstorm),

the fear of getting sick in general or a specific illness - for example, on cancer, a constant non-differentiated personal anxiety as a reaction to the uncertainty and the danger of situation or the symptom of emotional instability and the development of mental illness.

Moderate expressed fears and anxieties are considered to be normal and useful experiences in the context of the threat and resources mobilization to eliminate the probable or real danger. Reactive anxiety can be transformed from a transient state to a personality trait, a psychopathological symptom of chronic stress, and an exhaustion of adaptive mechanisms. Consequently, fear and anxiety, sharp changes in their direction in the direction of amplification or weakening may become the forerunners of psychopathisation of the individual (Bibikova, 2003; Hall, 2004).

Attaining level of obsessive ideas, various phobias, for example, xenophobia, fear of poverty, old age, loneliness, crime, war, as a ground for depression, escape from life and abuse of psycho-active substance. Quite often, problems arise due to automatic defense reactions of people to difficult life situations, the content and orientation of which are determined by "social heredity," that is, a person reacts automatically, just as his/her parents or others would react, and not moderately, as the situation requires.

Unreasonable protective mechanisms, instinctive, unconditionally reflexive (like a vomiting reflex) or conditioned childhood - help to save oneself, in fact, physical health and mental comfort from threats from the outside. Unreasonable protective mechanisms make it possible not to perceive or deny the existence of problems, to prevent them from consciousness (displacement), to redefine (rationalize), to translate into others (projection), or to give an opposite value (reactive formation).

Protective mechanisms split reality into certain elements (isolation), help to escape from reality (regression) and react asymmetrically (sublimation). These mechanisms allow you to maintain comfort in adverse situations, instead of leaving the comfort zone and straining for the real solution to them. It is believed that the mechanisms of protection block an adequate assessment of reality and deprive a person of the opportunity to change something in himself/herself or in a reality (Kirschbaum, 2005).

Most researchers of coping-strategies divide them into active and passive ones. Active strategies include the strategy of "problem solving" as a basic coping -strategy. They contain all human behavioral options aimed at solving a problem or stress situation, or exit from it, as well as a strategy of "seeking social support" aimed at obtaining social support. They can be applied simultaneously.

Passive coping-behavior is not acting, suffering or escaping, that is, having an active character. The ways of avoiding can be related to the disease, the intensification of the use of alcohol, drugs, an alternative to the active way of avoiding difficulties is suicide.

The most effective coping-strategies are an active copying to stop the action of a stressor. In this case, it is important to analyze the situation to solve the own existing problem; openness for support and help of the social environment; the attitude to a difficult situation as to a challenge and opportunity for gaining new experience and personal growth. In addition, a person in a difficult situation activates emotional intelligence: the resource here is the sympathy and understanding of others; a review of the goals and ways of life organizing, and in hopeless situations - stability and patience, expectations of favorable conditions for the solution of the situation.

Less rational coping-strategies are emotional response in a problem situation that reinforces the motivation of resistance, a sense of injustice, annoyance, anger. They can coexist with irrational protective mechanisms, for example, negating or replacing one activity (training) with other activities (for example, computer games, "jamming" of stress), quasi-activity - for example, smoking or inactivity ("to oversleep with the problem", because "The early bird gets the worm")

R. Lazarus and S. Folkman (Lazarus, Folkman, 1984) pick out three main criteria for the classification of coping -strategies, aimed at emotional experience problems, cognitive, and later practical solution of the problem, these actions are evaluated as successful or not successful coping -strategies, while a person in a difficult situation, can simultaneously use several strategies of overcoming, experiencing various emotional states from passion and enthusiasm to fear and anxiety, fatigue, apathy, depression. Such emotions have a contradictory effect on the process of solving life difficulties, have a

protective character, and activate overcoming as well.

Under the coping -strategies we understand the complex response of the individual to the perceived threat to him. As they grow older and accumulate experience, they become more effective. In the preadult age, which is the majority of students, they feel the lack of the experience of independent life, which puts them complex problems of development in the difficult situation of intensive studying and communication with new people. In this case, the lack of experience replaces them with a certain set of unconscious mechanisms for protecting the psyche from the influence of stressors.

The correlation of students and cadets' coping-strategies in the experience of their fear and anxiety in the complex has not been studied before, in spite of the scientific and practical significance of the definite problem.

Methodology

In order to identify the peculiarities of the experiences of students and cadets' fears and anxieties and to determine the conditions for coping-strategies application by them (students and cadets) in unfavourable situations, we have applied a set of techniques from five questionnaires:

- "The hierarchical structure of actual fears" by Y. Shcherbatykh, E.Ivlevoy (Psychological tests, 2007) to identify the existence and expressiveness of 24 typical fears, which is supplemented by the posttest conversation to specify additional positions and the overall assessment of the respondent (bold, cautious, coward);
- Detection of "Fear of Examinations" (Kreinina, 2005), which makes it possible to distinguish cognitive, emotional and physiological components of fear;
- Anxiety by C. Spielberg, adapted by Yu. Khanin (Psychological tests, 2007) for revealing personal and situational anxiety. The questionnaire consists of two scales of 20 questions, which are evaluated on a 4-point scale (the range of estimation is from 20 to 80 points for each scale. The result to 30 points indicates a slight anxiety, 31-45 - moderate, more than 46 – about heightened;
- "Indicator of Coping -Strategies" by J.Amirkhan (2004) to assess the levels of the development of three groups of coping-strategies: solving

problems, searching of social support and avoiding);

- Identification of the profile of the leading mechanisms of mental protection of personality as to Plut-chick-Kellerman-Conte (Life Style Index, LSI) (Psychological tests, 2007);
- Methods of mathematical statistics to assess the reliability of the differences between the comparison group - by gender and form of training (students study at their own expense, cadets - by public order).

During the post-test interviews there were isolated instances of earthquake fears, fires, drowning in the sea, illness (venereal diseases, cancer), AIDS, fear of blood, doctors (dentists), medical manipulations, in particular nurses, educators and even psychologists, police, weapons, thieves, violence, transport (for example, flying planes or getting under a train or a car), using acute objects, strangers, loneliness, punishment, making a mistake, losing something (up to the loss of faith in yourself), unfairness, delay, unknown (darkness, being buried alive or being in the cemetery, other mystical fears),

excitement, unexpected loud sounds. The fear is accompanied by a short-term intense or chronic feeling of anxiety, which is assessed by the subject as adequate or unfounded and excessive, which causes discomfort and lowers the quality of life.

The sample consisted of 60 students and cadets of the ODUPS (a total of 120 people, including 50 girls and 70 boys) who were interviewed by the participation of members of the psychological group of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy of the Odessa State University of Internal Affairs (ODUVS). Persons with high levels of fear and anxiety had the opportunity (if desired) to receive the psychological consultation from the authors of the article - to improve coping- strategies for overcoming fear and depriving excessive anxiety.

Results

The questionnaire of the "Hierarchical structure of actual fears" did not reveal significant differences between the statistical norm and the data of the questionnaires by us persons, except for certain types of threats presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Sources of fear specific to the questionnaires students and cadets

Item No	Source of Fear	Standard	Students	Cadets
1	Fear of spiders and snakes	5	4.3	3.2
5	Fear of crime	4	3.4	5.3
6	Fear of the authorities	8	6.2	10
8	Fear of responsibility	4	3	7.1
10	Fear of poverty	5	3.2	6.5
12	Fear of the future	5	4.3	6.3
13	Fear before the exams	5	3.4	5.6
14	Fear of war	6	7.8	7.5
20	Fear of illness	6	5.2	6.3
21	Fears related to sexual disorders	3	3.2	3.6
23	Fear of public speaking	4	3.2	4.8
24	Fear of domestic violence	3	2.6	3.8

The norm is the average ISAS value for healthy people aged 18-25 (for 10 point scale)

The table presents selectively only those data that are statistically different from the norms and exist between students and cadets according to Fisher's criterion at > 0.05 . The interpretation of these differences is related to the gender (among the cadets more young men, among students -

girls) and the material state of the respondents - students have better financial support from their parents than cadets. Cadets, thanks to special methods of selection, have a better state of physical and mental health, better understand the danger of crime; they are more than students afraid

of heads, responsibilities, and bad grades on examinations. The increased fear of war is due to the current situation; fear of poverty of future policemen is explained by the low level of wages and the prohibition of additional wages, fear of the future - its uncertainty. Specific fear of drowning is detected in individual conversations and is explained by the location of the ODUVS near the sea.

O.V. Craignina (2005) identified the connection between the students' fear before the examinations, with certain personal qualities - the level of appetites, the need for approval, emotional stability. Weakly expressed fear contributes to mobilization on the eve of the session. According to her, girls are more susceptible to fear, but later, due to their experience, gender differences are leveled off, the role of the level of aspirations and the motivation to succeed and the ability to level out the significance of unsuccessful examinations, because a satisfactory score suits all the participants of educational process, including students' parents. Approved by O.V. Craignins the method of detecting fears is assessed by her as valid, and in our opinion, it may be useful for verifying the diagnosis of "exam neurosis" in the rare cases where the student is not able to

overcome his/her fear of an exam often associated with a sense of bias of the teacher through personal conflicts that were not timely resolved. In our study, fear was closely related to personal anxiety, which grew as the session approached, and the lack of positive learning outcomes in terms of the current knowledge control.

A high level of personal and situational anxiety by C. Spielberg's questionnaire was exposed among all students and cadets with high level of fear before exams. It was also revealed to be higher among girls - compared to boys and students, compared to cadets. It is worth noting that girls make up the majority of students, and boys – the majority of cadets, to assess the proportion of these factors of fear and anxiety it is required a special analysis. C. Spielberg's questionnaire has a diagnostic value and is recommended for using by the psychological service of higher educational establishment.

With the help of J. Amirkhan's "Coping-strategies' indicator" it was shown that our respondents are mainly oriented towards a high level of problem-solving (44%), students want social support, and cadets more often try to avoid problems (see Table 2).

Table 2

Coping strategies of students and cadets according to J. Amirkhan's method (distribution in %)

Level	Solving Problems		Finding Social Support		Avoid Problems	
	Stud.	Course.	Stud.	Course.	Stud.	Course.
Very low	6	4	10	8	23	4
Low	20	16	22	16	13	12
Average	30	32	25	34	22	18
High	44	48	43	42	42	66

Indicators are shown in bold, which, according to Fisher's criterion, are different at > 0/05

Table 3 shows the distribution of coping

strategies of the surveyed boys and girls:

Table 3

Coping strategies distribution of boys and girls according to J. Amirkhan's method (distribution in%)

Level	Solving Problems		Finding Social Support		Support Avoid Problems	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Very low	3	7	18	4	16	3
Low	23	21	22	12	33	12
Average	27	23	32	40	28	28
High	47	44	28	44	23	57

As you can see, girls need more social support and more often than young men try to avoid

problems, and the boys, on the contrary, are looking for their own problems.

We were interested in the question of coping-strategies ratio and mechanisms of mental protection, which were investigated according to R. Plutchik-G.Kellerman-H.Konte's methodology.

Unlike the statistical norm of distribution of mechanisms of mental protection in healthy young people, the distribution in the experimental voter has been specific (see Table 4):

Table 4

Co-incidences (%) with the test key in the norm and in the experimental voter

Kind of defense	Standart	Students	Cadets	Boys	Girls
Displacement	20	13	22	15	20
Replacement	0	12	10	14	8
Projection	25	17	10	10	17
Hypercompensation	0	2	15	5	12
Regression	12	16	10	8	18
Denial	18	15	14	20	9
Compensation	0	3	13	14	2
Rationalization	25	22	6	14	14

The number of questions in different scales varies (from 10 to 17), the total tensile strength of protective mechanisms is 40-50%.

Forms of substitution and hypercompensation and compensation are specific: for students this is a busy artistic amateur, for cadets – sports.

Summarizing the experience of counseling 20 students and cadets who wanted to get rid of discomfort due to excessive fears and anxieties suggests the following. They turned to the help of a female person, most of whom had a status of students and only two – cadets.

The main attention of the consulting was paid to the identification of feelings, felt by people, who were complicated with their poor vocabulary, telling about their inner world, explaining their own understanding of the causes of their fear and anxiety (where and when their experiences appeared, an assessment of their intensity, dynamics, adequacy to circumstances).

The experience of overcoming discomfort, the effectiveness of coping- strategies and the potentially harmful effects of protective mechanisms were discussed. The best results were common for respondents who used to respond to the group form of reflection (Naidonov, 2017), were ready to listen to people of the same age with them and support them, performed home-grooming exercises on behavior rehearsal, and tried to critically rethink irrational thoughts. Due to their open discussion, they lost their toxicity and became manifestations of "normal" situational anxiety and useful signals about probable threats that should not be ignored.

Conclusion

The specificity of fears in youth is due to the inability to confidently assume responsibility for

their own actions or inaction at a new stage in relation to independent life and high sensitivity to the assessments of behavior by others.

Fear and anxiety arise in situations that threaten the physical or psychological comfort of the individual and require the use of coping - strategies that, due to lack of life experience, are not always well thought out and effective. This implies the need for social support, attempts to avoid difficulties, which are not fully realized by the mechanisms of mental protection, which do not solve the problems, but allow you to maintain a certain level of comfort, level off fears and anxieties that actually play a signal role, make reflexes and act in a certain way. Active coping strategies do not exclude false actions or inaction, which only make the situation worse.

The significance of the study is primarily due to the possibility of using test methods to assess the risk of nonadaptive and destructive responses of young people to the threats that they cause in fear and anxiety. Students and cadets, boys and girls do not react equally to threats, their fears, the level of anxiety, coping-strategies and protective mechanisms are different. A differentiated approach can increase the effectiveness of measures of the psychological service of educational institutions in relation to the prevention and correction of these experiences, taking into account individual characteristics and the role of others – first of all parents and course officers – for cadets.

Dependence on support, confusion are especially noticeable among girl- students and testify to the importance of the development of interval locus-control, the exit from the comfort zone on the basis of critical understanding of the

causes and assumption of responsibility. The reaction to deny the problems is more inherent to young cadets, regression and willingness to endure difficulties, instead of their initiative overcoming. This data should be taken into account by teachers who should avoid excessive pressure on students and cadets. Particularly those who show the sensitivity of the juice to evaluative judgments that can be perceived as humiliation are liable to be lost in difficult situations, for example during seminars or other knowledge control activities.

A promising area of research is the discovery of students (cadets) who experience excessive fear, anxiety and cannot overcome them on their own, and need the help in the development of reflexive skills, emotional-volitional self-control, experience in overcoming non-psychological states for the ability to consciously apply mechanisms of mental protection and mastering effective coping-strategies.

Conflict of interest. We state that there is no conflict of scientific interests.

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