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**THE VALUE-MEANING CORRELATIVES OF COPING
BEHAVIOR: COMPARATIVE RESEARCH OF MASTER'S
STUDENTS**

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Abstract

The topic of this article is important in view of increasing academic mobility which requires the understanding of both general and culture specific resources of stress-coping for engaging in a master's degree program. The main goal of the article is to identify and compare value-meaning correlatives between master's students from Kazakhstan and Tatarstan (Russia). With the use of the experimental method the parameters of the personal value-meaning sphere were identified (meaningfulness of life, hierarchy of values, acting on one's values) along with the coping strategies of master's students. The findings show that the meaningfulness of life directly relates to task-orientated coping and inversely relates to emotion-orientated in both student groups however in case with students from Kazakhstan it directly relates to the strategy of social diversion. For all master's students avoidance-orientated coping was most related to values. The degree of attaining and acting in accordance with one's values relates more to coping in comparison to the parameters of importance and this is even more common for Kazakhs. The findings demonstrate the difference in how values relate to coping strategies in the sample groups. The results also show both universal and culture specific value resources for coping which need to be taken into account by university services offering psychological support to master's students who study in a multicultural environment.

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Keywords: Value, value-meaning system, coping, meaningfulness of life, personality



1. Introduction

Master's programs are one of the new forms of higher education in both Russia and Kazakhstan. Studying at a master's level requires students to work independently towards deep professional learning and research. At this stage people often transition to adulthood and face new types of issues in their lives. This can lead to stressful situations which have to be effectively managed. In view of this the topic of personal coping correlatives in Master's students is very important.

2. Problem Statement

In psychology coping is understood as cognitive and behavioral activities aimed at lowering the influence of stress and recovering from life's difficulties (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987). Coping is continuously being developed both theoretically (Folkman, 1984, 2008, 2009, 2012; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000, 2004) and empirically. Age and gender specific (Folkman et al., 1987; Garnefski et al., 2002; et al., 2015), situation type specific (Podaná & Imříšková, 2016; Blaxton & Bergeman, 2017), personality specific (Abitov et al., 2016) and other types of characteristics as well as the role of the internet and IT technologies (Van Ingen & Wright, 2016), different ways of coping (Pöllänen, 2015) have been explored.

Searching for the value-meaning basis of coping is a peculiar task. The role of the meaningfulness of life has been discovered which serves as a buffer against stress (Park, Baumeister, 2017), as a means of overcoming stressful events (Debats, Drost & Hansen, 1995; Halama, 2000) and resisting suicidal tendencies (Edwards & Holden, 2001). Value basis was traced in the observed relations between the idea of God and coping styles (Tashimova et al., 2014), in spiritual beliefs which help cancer patients to cope (Rabkin et al., 2009), in the relations between coping and the religious orientation of prisoners (Shagarova, 2013). Personal values play the role of a resource and predictor of stress coping behavior among teenagers (Barni & Danioni, 2016). They serve a similar role in management (Shiyanevskaya, 2016) and they are also related to the coping strategies of war veterans (Gubareva & Taburova, 2016).

In the content of coping strategies can also be traced connections with values. Social deviation can imply the importance of social surroundings for a person; task-oriented coping resonates with the value of achievements while emotion-orientated coping underlines the significance of emotions.

In relation to coping strategies and the meaning of life among master's students gender differences were observed (Edwards & Holden, 2001). In view of cross-cultural coping research it is reasonable to suppose that apart from gender other socio-cultural factors can influence in some way or another this relation.

When Spanish and American college students were compared the difference in average stress level was determined (Connor-Smith & Calvete, 2004). The reactions to stressful situations were different. In a situation in which they felt like victims Taiwanese teenagers sought their friends' and adults' support whereas American teenagers were more self-reliant and tried to solve their problems on their own (Ma & Bellmore, 2016). Personal control turns out to be related to coping styles for British but not for Japanese (O'Connor & Shimizu, 2002; Yeh, Kwong Arora & Wu, 2006). These examples of coping differences reflect how differently some cultures value collectivism and individualism. However, the value systems of participants were not studied in these publications.

All of the aforementioned makes it reasonable to hypothesize that coping is related to value-meaning structures and that these relations are culture specific. Identifying the socio-cultural nature of the relations between coping and value-meaning structures will help understand the meaning of particular coping strategies in the context of a particular culture. Looking from a cultural perspective will enable to assess adequately the effectiveness of a particular strategy.

3. Research Questions

In view of the development and growing popularity of student mobility programs comparing the value-meaning basis of coping of students from Kazakhstan and Russia represents practical interest. Russia and Kazakhstan were parts of the same country for a long time they take similar cultural positions on the scale of individualism-collectivism. In comparative research devoted to personal structures it has already been shown that these countries have both similarities and differences (Salikhova & Akhmetova, 2015, 2016). Coping has also been studied however the value-meaning basis of coping has not been addressed as an issue. Please replace this text with context of your paper.

We differentiate between content and dynamic aspects in personal value-meaning regulation (Salikhova, 2009, 2013, 2015). The contents of important for a person values and their place in the personal value hierarchy form their content aspect. The degree of living and acting in accordance with one's values forms the dynamic aspect which plays the role of feedback in the process of regulation. Our findings show that dynamic parameters relate to different coping methods even more than content parameters (Salikhova & Klement'eva, 2014). However, there have not been cross-cultural studies yet in this regard.

4. Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study was to determine both general and culture specific value-meaning correlatives in coping between master's students from Kazakhstan and Tatarstan.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Materials

The following methods were applied for obtaining the empirical evidences.

- Life-Purpose Orientations Questionnaire (LPO) including the following parameters: goals in life (Goals), the emotional intensity of life (Process), self-actualization satisfaction (Result), the life locus of control (LC-Life), Ego locus of control (LC-Ego), the general meaningfulness of life (ML) (Leont'iev, 1992).
- The Rokeach (1973) technique as modified by Fantalova (2001). In pairs subjects compared twelve terminal values by criteria of their importance and attainability. The list included the following values: active life, health (both physical and mental), interesting job, the beauty of nature and art, love (both sensual and spiritual closeness to a partner), wealth (absence of financial constraints), close friendship, self-confidence (absence of inner conflicts and doubts), cognition (including ability to extend knowledge and get new experience), freedom

(independence of mind and action), happy family life, creativity. The following criteria were defined in each group: 1) importance (I) as the number of cases when the value was chosen as a more important one in a couple; 2) attainability (A) as the number of cases when the value was chosen as more attainable in a couple; 3) the difference of importance and attainability (I-A).

- The Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (Endler & Parker, 1990) as modified in Russian by Kryukova (2010), it is a 48-item instrument used to measure three basic coping strategies: Task-Oriented, Emotion-Oriented and Avoidance. The Avoidance Scale contains two subscales: Distraction and Social Diversion. We used Russian- and Kazakh-language versions of the technique, their equivalence was shown earlier (Salikhova & Akhmetova, 2015). All participants in the study had the opportunity to choose a variant of the technique in the Kazakh language.

5.2. Participants

The current research has surveyed 494 master's students (51,8% men and 48,2% women) at the age of 21 to 29 years, among them: master's students from Kazan Federal University, $n=216$, $M_{age} = 23.2$, $SD_{age} = 2.3$ (Russia, Tatarstan, Kazan) and master's students from Kazakhstan National Universities (KazNU, KazNTU), $n=278$, $M_{age}=22.3$, $SD_{age} =1.6$ (Kazakhstan, Almaty). Participation was voluntary, with no compensation, and anonymity was guaranteed.

5.3. Methods of data processing

The data were processed applying the descriptive statistics procedures, independent two-sample Student t-test, correlation analysis based on the Pearson's formula.

6. Findings

6.1. The correlations of coping strategies with meaningful orientations of personality.

In both sample groups all LPO-scales are directly related to the Task-Oriented strategy and inversely related to the Emotion-Oriented strategy (Table 01). Only the correlation between self-actualization satisfaction (Result) and the Task-Oriented strategy for master's students from Kazakhstan is lower than the confidence level.

There is no correlation between LPO-scales and the Avoidance strategy in both sample groups. The only exception is the direct relation between the Avoidance strategy and the parameter LC-Ego in the Kazakhs' group. Moreover, there are no correlations between the Distraction strategy (D) and LPO-scales in both groups. The strategy of Social Diversion is not related to LPO-scales in the Tatarstans' group whereas in the Kazakhstan's group it is directly related to four scales.

Table 01. The correlations of coping strategies with meaningful orientations of personality in experimental samples (according to Spearman)

Parameters	Task-Oriented strategy		Emotion-Oriented strategy		Avoidance strategy					
					General Score		Distraction		Social Diversion	
	kaz	tat	kaz	Tat	kaz	tat	kaz	tat	kaz	tat
Goals	0,18**	0,28**	-0,24**	-0,18**	0,07	0,00	-0,03	-0,02	0,13*	0,00
Process	0,16**	0,17*	-0,19**	-0,14*	0,05	0,11	-0,06	0,04	0,12*	0,10
Result	0,11	0,22**	-0,29**	-0,20**	0,03	0,10	-0,05	0,06	0,07	0,09
LC-Ego	0,23**	0,24**	-0,28**	-0,16*	0,19**	0,02	0,03	-0,01	0,25**	0,02
LC-Life	0,14*	0,24**	-0,27**	-0,19**	0,06	0,02	-0,05	0,00	0,12	0,04
ML	0,20**	0,23**	-0,29**	-0,27**	0,08	0,04	-0,06	-0,01	0,17**	0,04

Legend: Asterisks indicate the values of reached statistical significance at the p-level p<0,05 (*), p<0,01 (**), p<0,001 (***) ; **kaz** - students from Kazakhstan, **tat** - students from Tatarstan.

The situations with the relation between the meaningfulness of life and coping were similar in both groups and in accordance with earlier research: the higher the meaningfulness of life (ML), the more likely Task-Oriented strategy is to be used and less likely the Emotion-Oriented strategy is to be used. Only the direct correlation between the strategy of Social Diversion and the meaningfulness of life (ML) found in the Kazakhstan's group can be considered culture specific (this correlation was absent in the Tatarstan's groups).

6.2. The correlations of value's parameters and coping strategies.

The findings show (Table 02) that for group from Kazakhstan 5 coping strategies relate to importance of values (I), 16 – with the attainability of values (A), 13 – with the difference of importance and attainability (I-A). For the group from Tatarstan these results were 9, 10 and 4 accordingly. The Task-Oriented strategy show 11 correlations, the Emotion-Oriented strategy – 5 correlations, the Avoidance strategy – 20, its subscales Distraction and the Social Diversion have 20 and 15 relations accordingly.

Coping relates to almost all values except for the value *creativity*. None of its parameters in neither sample groups related to coping.

Table 02. [The correlations of value's parameters and coping strategies in experimental samples (according to Pearson)]

The values		Task-Oriented Strategy		Emotion-Oriented Strategy		Avoidance Strategy					
						General Score		Distraction		Social Diversion	
		kaz	tat	kaz	tat	kaz	tat	kaz	tat	kaz	tat
Active life	I	0,02	0,02	-0,11	-0,01	-0,05	0,03	-0,12*	0,03	0,04	0,00
	A	0,01	-0,05	-0,01	0,03	-0,12*	-0,04	-0,12*	-0,03	-0,06	-0,02
	I-A	0,00	0,06	-0,07	-0,02	0,04	0,06	0,00	0,07	0,05	0,04
Health	I	-0,04	-0,11	0,00	-0,05	0,06	-0,12	0,08	-0,11	0,02	-0,05
	A	0,04	0,14*	0,04	0,04	-0,08	0,10	-0,12	0,08	-0,03	0,08
	I-A	-0,05	-0,21**	0,00	-0,07	0,16**	-0,18**	0,19**	-0,15*	0,11	-0,12
Interesting job	I	0,09	0,11	-0,02	0,06	0,00	0,10	0,00	0,14*	-0,01	0,00
	A	-0,07	0,01	-0,07	-0,05	-0,16**	-0,03	-0,16**	-0,02	-0,14*	-0,05
	I-A	0,11	0,07	0,06	0,08	0,14*	0,09	0,15*	0,10	0,11	0,03
The beauty of nature and art	I	-0,08	-0,12	0,11	0,11	-0,04	-0,03	0,07	0,03	-0,12*	-0,04
	A	-0,15*	-0,17*	0,10	0,11	-0,15*	-0,13	-0,03	-0,07	-0,22**	-0,13
	I-A	0,08	0,05	-0,01	-0,08	0,10	0,08	0,06	0,08	0,13*	0,07

Love	I	-0,03	-0,02	-0,02	0,09	-0,04	0,05	-0,04	0,02	-0,06	0,07
	A	0,01	-0,04	-0,02	-0,06	0,14*	0,04	0,14*	-0,01	0,11	0,02
	I-A	-0,03	0,02	0,02	0,10	-0,14*	-0,01	-0,16**	0,01	-0,11	0,03
Wealth	I	0,07	-0,01	0,06	-0,01	0,11	0,08	0,11	0,10	0,03	0,06
	A	0,03	0,06	0,10	-0,04	0,08	0,02	0,14*	0,07	-0,04	0,01
	I-A	0,02	-0,04	-0,04	0,03	0,04	0,04	-0,03	0,02	0,07	0,00
Close friendship	I	0,00	0,01	-0,15*	0,09	-0,02	0,23**	-0,06	0,15*	0,05	0,23**
	A	0,04	-0,02	-0,12*	0,11	0,08	0,15*	-0,05	0,12	0,20**	0,18**
	I-A	-0,06	0,02	-0,02	-0,06	-0,12*	0,01	-0,02	-0,04	-0,16**	-0,01
Self-confidence	I	0,07	0,09	0,00	-0,06	0,01	-0,13*	0,01	-0,12	0,06	-0,09
	A	0,02	0,11	-0,12*	-0,21**	-0,02	-0,08	0,01	-0,06	0,02	-0,09
	I-A	0,03	-0,04	0,10	0,13*	0,02	-0,05	-0,01	-0,04	0,03	-0,01
Cognition	I	0,09	0,08	-0,07	-0,13	-0,06	-0,11	-0,08	-0,11	-0,02	-0,13
	A	0,15*	-0,09	-0,04	-0,04	-0,02	-0,21**	-0,02	-0,18**	-0,01	-0,20**
	I-A	-0,07	0,11	-0,02	-0,09	-0,03	0,01	-0,07	-0,01	0,00	-0,01
Freedom	I	-0,19**	0,18**	0,11	-0,07	-0,06	-0,02	0,03	-0,04	-0,12*	0,03
	A	-0,02	0,12	0,09	0,00	0,03	-0,06	0,08	-0,01	-0,02	-0,03
	I-A	-0,15*	0,03	0,02	-0,05	-0,10	0,03	-0,06	-0,02	-0,11	0,04
Happy family life	I	0,08	-0,06	-0,01	0,11	-0,01	0,19**	-0,06	0,11	0,04	0,17*
	A	-0,07	-0,03	-0,01	0,04	0,12*	0,15*	0,08	0,09	0,12	0,14*
	I-A	0,12*	-0,02	-0,01	0,06	-0,13*	0,02	-0,14*	0,01	-0,08	0,01
Creativity	I	-0,07	-0,12	0,10	-0,03	0,01	-0,13	0,03	-0,06	-0,02	-0,15*
	A	0,01	-0,13	0,00	0,07	0,02	-0,09	0,01	-0,09	0,03	-0,08
	I-A	-0,06	-0,08	0,10	-0,13	0,00	-0,10	0,04	-0,02	-0,05	-0,13
Quantity of connections		5	4	3	2	10	7	9	4	7	6

Legend: Asterisks indicate the values of reached statistical significance at the p-level $p < 0,05$ (*), $p < 0,01$ (**), $p < 0,001$ (***); **kaz** - students from Kazakhstan, **tat** - students from Tatarstan.

In both sample groups the relations between coping and different value parameters were found. Notably, master's students from Kazakhstan had more relations with dynamic parameters whereas master's students from Tatarstan – with content parameters.

The most significant difference in the groups were found in the relation between Task-Oriented strategy and an importance (I) of the value *freedom*, these were opposite in the sample groups. The more important freedom was for master's students from Tatarstan, the more likely they were to use Task-Oriented strategy. Freedom is a democratic value and it is more characteristic for individualism-orientated cultures. The role of this value for Task-Oriented strategy is seen differently in Kazakhstan and Tatarstan.

The groups showed a lot of similarity in the relation between Task-Oriented strategy and attainability (A) of the value *beauty of nature and art*: the more attainable it is the less likely Task-Oriented strategy is to be used. Attaining this value can be viewed as an alternative to Task-Oriented strategy which is analogous to the polarity between action and observation.

Master's students from Tatarstan use task-oriented strategy more often when the value *health* is more attainable while students from Kazakhstan use Task-Oriented strategy more often when the value *cognition* is more attainable.

The inverse relation between the Emotion-Oriented strategy and attainability (A) of the value *self-confidence* is not culture specific. This is psychologically predictable and resonates with the relation between the Emotion-Oriented strategy and low level of the meaningfulness of life (ML).

The relation the Emotion-Oriented strategy with the value *close friendship* was found only in the Kazakhstsan's group. The more attainable this value is, the less likely they are to use the Emotion-

Oriented strategy. They view and treat friendship as a resource for coping with stress which alleviates emotional strain.

The Avoidance strategy has the biggest amount of correlations with value parameters in both sample groups and for each group they were specific.

In the Tatarstan's group the more important close relationships are, the more likely the Avoidance strategy is to be used. However, the situation is opposite for the value *self-confidence*: the more important *self-confidence* is, the less likely the Avoidance strategy is to be used.

In the Kazakhstan's group the Avoidance strategy was used less often when the attainability of action values was high however when close relationships were more attainable the situation was reverse.

All in all, the use of the Distraction strategy and the strategy of Social Diversion were in both groups related to different values with an exception of the correlation between the Distraction strategy and the difference of importance and attainability (I-A) of the value *health* and the correlation between the strategy of Social Diversion and attainability (A) of the value *close friendship* which were found in both sample groups.

Among Kazakhstan's group the strategy of Social Diversion is also supported by attaining the value *close friendship*. They also have values that are related to lesser use of the strategy of Social Diversion, for example, an importance (I) of the value *freedom* and all the parameters of the value *beauty of nature and art* which are inversely related to this strategy. These values replace or act as an alternative to social basis among Kazakhstan students.

Both forms of the Avoidance strategy for Tatarstan's group negatively relate realization of the value *cognition* while an importance (I) of the value *interesting job* is positively related to the strategy of Social Diversion.

For Kazakhstan students the Distraction strategy negatively relates to the value *active life* while it positively relates to attainability (A) of the value *love* and the parameter (I-A) of the values *health* and *interesting job*.

7. Conclusion

This research has revealed similarities as well as differences of value-meaning correlatives in coping between master's students from Kazakhstan and Tatarstan. Generalizing all obtained results, it is possible to assert:

- In the sample groups of Master's students both general and culture specific relations among coping strategies and the meaningfulness of life were identified. What we found to be general is the direct relation between the meaningfulness of life and the Task-Orientated strategy of coping and its inverse relation with the Emotion-Orientated strategy. The relation between the meaningfulness of life and the strategy of Social Diversion turned out to be culture specific: for Kazakhstan students this relation is direct while for Tatarstan students this relation is absent.
- Coping relates to both the content parameters of values (i.e. to the position of values in one's value hierarchy) and dynamic parameters which reflect the scale of attaining and acting on values in life. Master's students from Tatarstan coping had more relations to the content parameters of values while students from Kazakhstan coping had more relations to the dynamic

parameters. The greatest number of links with values has been identified in the Avoidance strategy.

- The following inverse relations are universal: between the Task-Oriented strategy and the value *beauty of nature and art*; between the Emotion-Oriented strategy and the value *self-confidence*. The most noticeable contrast is in the relation between the value *freedom* and the Task-Oriented strategy: for Kazakhstan students this relation is negative while for Tatarstan students it is positive.
- The content basis in the relations between coping and values was identified. Some of them are culture specific while others are universal. The Social Diversion strategy is universally related to the importance and attainability of the values close relationship. The negative relation between the Avoidance strategy and the values of individual pro-activeness is also universal. Particular sets of values and some of their parameters (that relate to coping) were culture specific.

The research results can be useful for university services offering psychological support to master's students who study in a multicultural environment.

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