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## ADAPTABILITY AND PERSONALITY CHANGE IN A DIFFICULT SITUATION, SUBJECT AUTONOMY AND SOCIOTROPY: EXPERIMENTAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECTS

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### Abstract

The actuality problems of adaptation in modern conditions is determined by attention to the exploration of human resources to overcome difficult life situations. The purpose of this article is to discuss the hypothetical ideas of individual determinants of the coping difficult situations, the mechanisms of the changing personality with stable individual characteristics of “autonomy” and “sociotropy”. Leading method is a method of theoretical and empirical analysis of experimental data. Were obtained results about the role of autonomy (independence) and sociotropii (dependence on public approval) in choosing coping strategies the adaptability. Confirmed that a difficult situation can significantly influence on personality change, in particular, in particular, neurasthenic, anxious-phobic syndromes and disorders adaptation. It was found the importance of self-regulation in determining individual resource adaptability for autonomous and for sociotropic types.

It is confirmed that in a difficult situation the adaptive relationships and emotions of “sociotropic” subjects are unstable; the individual resource of self-regulation mainly manifests itself in the form of adaptive copings in accordance with the specifics of border changes of personality. It was found that “autonomous” have are more robust indicators of emotional sphere and adaptive relationship in difficult situations due to the preparedness to change and overcome the stereotype of presentation; it turned out that autonomy and awareness are resource of self-regulation behavior entities in the choice behavioral strategies to overcome and adaptation, taking into account the conditions of the situation. The results presented in the paper could help psychologists, physicians, researchers in their scientific pursuits, and other specialists investigating the problem of individual resources and individual resources of human adaptation.

**Keywords:** Difficult situation, Autonomy, Sociotropy, Subject activity, Adaptability, Conscious self-regulation.

## **Introduction**

The relevance of the problem stated in the article is due to the fact that personality change is often seen as the result of emotional stress arising from the difficulties of carrying out any tasks that are external to it and generally beyond the control of its behavior. Sure enough, no one would deny that general changes in social behavior serve to increase the number of various external factors having psychogenic effects that may cause changes in a personality and the onset of maladaptation due to changes in their traditional way of life. Currently there are more publications about the fact that the main cause of this is the ongoing globalization that threatens to disrupt the balance between the mental health of a person and their relation to themselves and society (Bauman, 2004). These processes produce a loss of confidence, feelings of insecurity in their being and lack of effective self-realization. In these circumstances, all the more significant is the role of the person with their unique abilities to find the internal peace to resist negative external influences and the ability to detect adaptability providing conditions for the development of a personality generating an urgent need to study the resource base of the human. Modern science offers a number of new concepts, particularly focused on the idea of self-reliance and self-regulation of human as the subject of his activity (Rubinstein, 1997). The subjective principle (Brushlinskyi, 1992) makes it possible to offer versions of the cause of a transformative activity in difficult situations, come closer to finding mechanisms actualizing the individual resources of adaptability in difficult situations (Konopkin, 1980; Sergienko, 2009). Given the importance of the issues from the standpoint of the latest research of subjective capacities the need for experimental research to study the determinants of individual variations of human adaptability grows acute.

## **Materials and Methods**

A observation in a specially organized environment and activities (rehabilitation centers for disabled children); clinic-psychological method of anamnesis; self-reports; method of expert evaluations; SMIL method which is a modification of MMPI (Minnesota Personality Inventory); method of adaptive attitude to difficult situations (MAOTs); coping with stress and situations generating anxiety test; methods of statistical analysis of data using the Student's t-test for independent samples, tabular and graphical presentation of the results. The experiment was participated in by the mothers of children diagnosed with cerebral palsy (ICP).

## **Results**

### **3.1. Theoretical and empirical grounds.**

The theoretical and empirical grounds of the hypothesis proposed were built on the conformity with the modern principles of scientific knowledge, systematicity, above all, finding new generalizations and empirical arguments on

based on the analysis of individual psychological characteristics of mothers put in difficult situations in which they are under pressure due to the upbringing and development of disabled children.

Subjective adaptability is defined by us as a particular organization of the mental in which the independence of the choice of types, forms and methods of regulatory activity and their implementation are ensured promoting finding conscious ways to resolve emerging problems and difficult situations in life (Kolpakova, 2012, 2013). Our definition of adaptability relies on the resources of the subject and involves, above all, their personal stable qualities, among which we highlight “sociotropy” and “autonomy” in this analysis.

Sociotropy is considered as a sustainable quality of socio-oriented focus, the characteristics of which define the degree of self-regulation motivation and the need to use it depending on the prevailing conditions of social situations and interpersonal relationships.

Autonomy is seen as a stable quality according to the subjective characteristics accepted in psychology (Stepanov, 2005), the use of which allows one to point out that the motivation of self-regulation is stimulated independently by taking responsibility for the choice of strategies, tactics as well as their implementation.

Based on the above, we have assumed that:

1) A difficult life situation makes it possible to identify individual differences in the structure of personality traits as high requirements are set to the individual qualities as regulation resources;

2) Adaptability as an integrative feature expressing an individual resource as the ability to find ways of regulatory activity, providing a resistance (adaptation) or responsiveness (overcoming) in a varying environment, happens to be different for various people in a similar difficult situation;

its efficiency being dependent on the subjective determination of the parameters of the regulatory activity, due to the fact that:

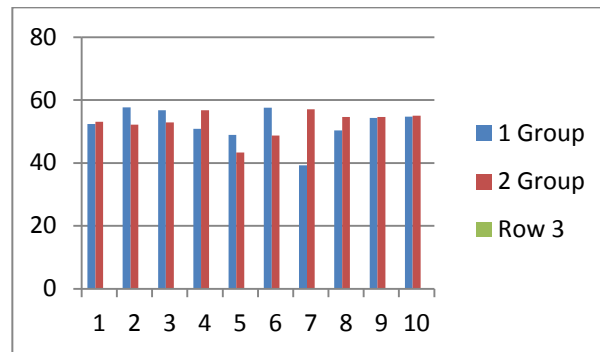
- “Autonomous” individuals have a structure of relations in a difficult situation that is more balanced, thus the choice of methods of regulatory activity is independent and more focused;

- “Sociotropic” individuals have a structure of relations in a difficult situation that is unstable, thus the choice of methods determined by the regulatory activity is defined by the inclination to hang on to unpleasant worries due to searching for social opportunities to solve problems;

- “Autonomous” individuals have a transformative activity that reflects a more mature level of regulatory activity of choice than “sociotropic” ones do which finds reflection in the ways of coping behavior (coping strategies).

### 3.2. Analysis and discussion

Analysis of the average profile of mothers who have sick children and mothers who have healthy children showed (Table 1): Table 1: Comparative significance assessments of the manifestations of personality traits in mothers who have healthy and sick children



#### Designation:

Group 1 – mothers who have children with movement disorders:

Group 2 – mothers who have healthy children

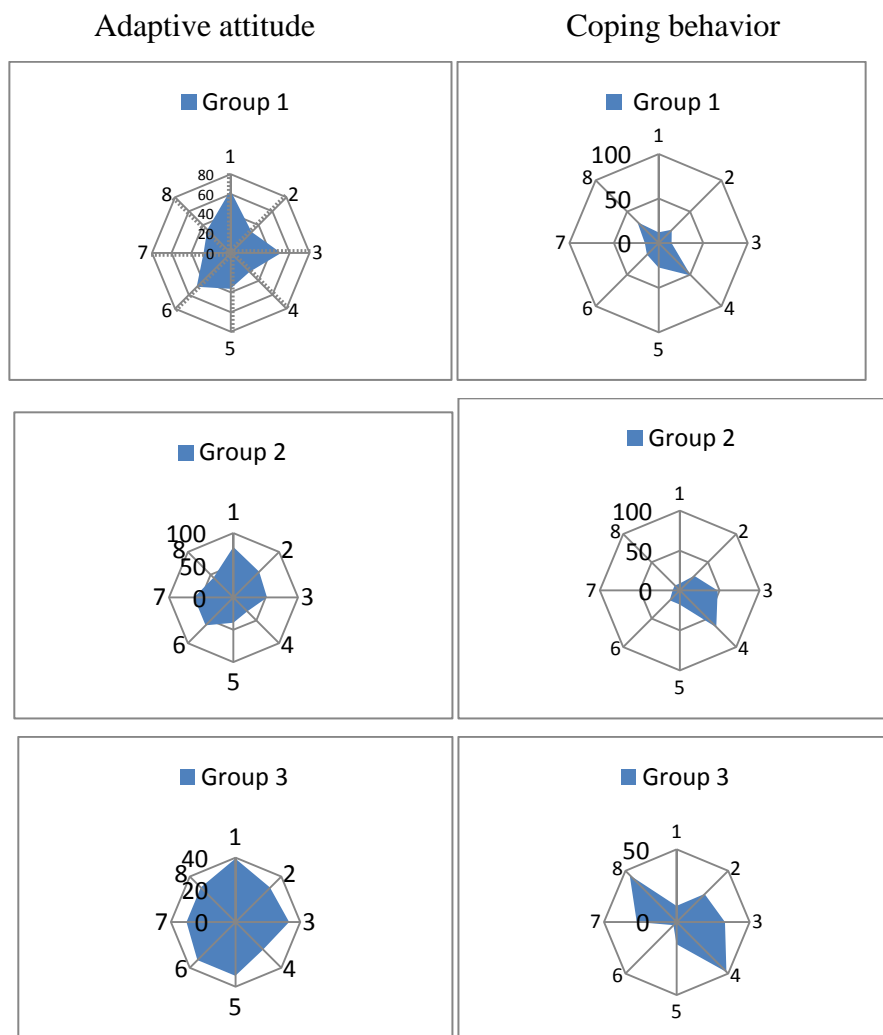
The unique feature of the profile of Group 1 as compared to Group 2 is the rise in the scales of 2 ( $p < 0.001$ ), 3 ( $p < 0.01$ ) and 6 ( $p < 0.001$ ) which points to the presence of increased nervousness, emotional stress, symptoms of dependence on interpersonal behavior, tendencies for personal disharmony and maladaptive state, on the one hand, a decrease in the scales of 4 ( $p < 0.001$ ) and 7 ( $p < 0.001$ ) points to the lack of caution in behavioral reactions, decreased motivation of achievements and challenges in interpersonal behavior.

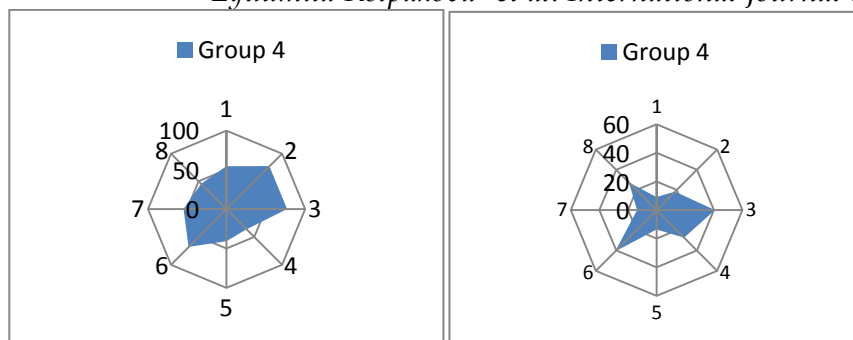
The unique feature of the profile of Group 2 is the rise in the profile of scales 4 ( $p < 0.001$ ) and 7 ( $p < 0.001$ ) indicating increased activity, a marked tendency towards creativity and efficiency, an external behavior that may appear as balanced but having a tendency for internal conflict. It should be noted that the motif to resolve difficult situations arising and completing vital tasks is expressed in Group 2 in a way more stark than in Group 1. In addition, the organization of psychic structures in the profile group shows no inclination to manifestations of worry and anxiety.

The argument for interpreting the differences obtained in the absence of a difficult situation factor that would have a long trend in life to such a degree of the threat that mothers in Group 1 are influenced by. This is confirmed by the high rate of the authenticity levels significance of the comparative analysis of the values (see. above) for the Student t-test. Based on the data obtained, one can conclude the confirmation of the first hypothesis. On the basis of the clinical-psychological anamnesis method, self-reports, direct observation and consultation, those mothers who met

the criteria for differentiation based on “autonomy”–“sociotropy” (N = 107 persons) out of the total number of people involved in the previous experiment were invited to participate in further mother experiments. They comprised 4 groups: Group 1 with steady indications of “autonomy” (autonomy-oriented content of subjective self-regulation) who showed “norm” indications as per the criterion of emotional stress (26 persons); the others that is Groups 2, 3 and 4 included mothers with stable indications of “sociotropy” (socio-oriented focus of subjective self-regulation) who had been recognized as having neurotic, anxious-phobic syndromes and adaptation syndrome by the diagnostic criteria (26 people, 27 people, 28 people), who had participated in an experiment to study the parameters of adaptability and those of self-regulation using the stress and events generating anxiety coping test. The above mathematical and statistical analysis that was performed allowed presenting the findings in graphic form and proceeding to their interpretation as part of the hypotheses set (Figure 1). The data obtained allows one to assess the severity of an individual pattern of behavior, reflecting the specificity of expression of maladaptability and adaptability as well as the degree of success in overcoming a difficult situation by the “autonomous” and “sociotropic” types of personality (see. Figure 1).

(Figure 1).





**Fig.1 Structural composition of the differences in the indicators of adaptive attitude and coping behavior in groups of autonomous and sociotropic mothers with a different individually-personal predisposition (%).**

**Designations:**

Group 1 – autonomous; Group 2: neurotic type sociotropic individuals; Group 3: anxiety-phobic type sociotropic individuals; Group 4: sociotropic individuals of the adaptation disorder type

*Adaptive attitude measurable parameters:*

A) The “Adaptive Attitude” to a difficult situation concept covers:

1. Feasibility to change the stereotype of presentation/failure to do so;
2. Dependency/autonomy from external attitudes;
3. Insolubility of contradictions/acceptable compromise;
4. Unpreparedness/Preparedness to come to terms with a failure, correct the life strategies;
5. Ill-resilience/Resilience to losses and life changes;
6. Rigid/Flexible behavior mobility;
7. Pessimistic/Optimistic mindset;
8. Intolerance (shut out from social experience)/Tolerance (open to social experience).

B) The concept of “Coping behavior” covers:

1. Confrontation coping;
2. Distancing;
3. Self-control;
4. Search for social support;
5. Acceptance of responsibility;
6. Escape-avoidance;
7. Planning to solve the problem;
8. Positive reevaluation.

The “autonomous” Group (G1) showed an uptick in the indicator of “feasibility to change the stereotype of presentation” (63.6 \* at the  $p < 0.05$ ) reflecting the attitude of readiness to change as the individual had realized the defect, social deprivation and conditions developing around it. It should be noted that in the overall structure this figure represents a certain dominant while the equally weighted values of the other components of the adaptive attitude are relative. The choice of the self-regulation method in this group is defined by the following types of coping: firstly “search for social support” (\*\* at 51.5 p,  $< 0.01$ ) and secondly “positive revaluation” (33.3). The identified variant of diagnostic combination “adaptive attitude - a way of self-regulation” points to an adequate task-oriented regulatory activity based on awareness and activity as the most important options for individual resources of self-regulation defining the possibilities of coping with the difficult situation by man as a subject of his own life and activity.

The “sociotropic” showed some details differing from the “autonomous” type. The second group which united mothers by the type of neurotic syndrome has the following indicators on the authenticity level significance that is “feasibility to change the stereotype of presentation” (78.3 \* at the  $p < 0.05$ ) and a predisposition towards acute worries giving rise to “a pessimistic mindset” (60.9 \*\*\* at  $p < 0.001$ ); the value weight of the latter determining the dominant in the adaptive attitude structure to difficult situations. In general, a starkly pronounced personality can be represented as another weaving of a set of certain contradictory characteristics. Thus, on the one hand, for individuals of this type the affiliative need is the driving and never-saturated one as is the need for interpersonal relationship, on the other hand, there is another problem linked to deficiency of the fulfillment of these needs. The identified indicators do draw attention: “Rigid, non-adaptive mobility” (60.9); “Insolubility of contradictions” (60.9) and “Dependence on external attitudes” (56.5). The presented version presents troubled relations in the structure of adaptability. Coping “search for social support” (65.2 \*\* at  $p < 0,01$ ) is highlighted as a significant variant of individual resources. The identified variant of the diagnostic combination “adaptive attitude - a way of self-regulation” is due to the dependence on interpersonal relationships and indicates the orientation of the search of a method to regulate not in oneself but in others.

In the third group which unites mothers by the type of anxiety-phobic syndrome, the leading concept of adaptive relationships is not indicated. The argument for interpreting this fact is the very nature of this type of mental organization that is dependence on any strong personality that can satisfy the need for freedom from fear, especially the fear of taking responsibility for the individual choice of ways to cope with a difficult situation. As part of the passive type of adaptability profile there are individual coping resources presented performed through the following types of coping: “search for social support (48.5)”, “positive revaluation” (45.5), “self-control” (33.3). The statistical

significance of the choice of regulation methods was not detected; it corresponds to the level of average and below-average values by the quantitative index. The fourth group which unites mothers by the type of maladaptive reaction syndrome has the following characteristics. According to the concept of adaptive attitude it is: "Dependence on external attitudes" (77.3 \*\*\* at  $p < 0,001$ ); "Rigid, non-adaptive mobility" (68.1 \*\* at  $p < 0,01$ ); "Pessimistic mindset" (54.5 \* at the  $p < 0.05$ ); "Unpreparedness to come to terms with a failure, correct the life strategies" (36.4 \* at the  $p < 0.05$ ) and "Insolubility of contradictions" (77.3). The significant level of confidence reflects the values of the identified multi-layered problems that require special attention. The regulation method is often represented by the choice of coping "escape-avoidance" (40.9 \*\* at  $p < 0,01$ ) being the most significant one among all the other used. This coping strategy acts as an individual resource of adaptability in a difficult situation for this type.

## **Discussions**

Now, studying of peculiarities of self-regulation and stress coping behavior as part of the adaptive problem-solving attitude to difficult situations in a constantly changing social environment has acquired special relevance. According to Alexander Yu (2000), although the mechanisms of mental adaptation rest on the homeostatic basis, at the same time, they orient primarily towards the "external" environment, because man is constantly in the process of active relations with it. O. Konopkin (1980) understands self-regulation as a systematically organized psychological process of initiation, construction, maintenance and management of internal and external activities aimed at achieving the objectives of the subject. Nowadays one can witness the growing interest in the search for the determinants of the processes of regulation and self-regulation in various aspects of their study. From our point of view, such determinants should include stable individual-typological characteristics with prognostic importance for the types of behavioral responses to stress, worries, interpersonal skills, peculiarities of thinking, etc. In particular, we highlight the "Autonomy" and "Sociotropy". The essential feature of autonomy is independence with the urge for action being defined by internal set grounds, not external ones. The essential feature of sociotropy is the dependence on society and interpersonal relations. Psychological literature shows them as two phenomena with different styles of direction, defining the nature of activity and regulation. In domestic psychology, the concept of "autonomy" (self-consistency) is seen in the structure of the characteristics of the subject of activity, a category introduced by S. Rubinstein (1997) and developed by K. Abulhanova (1991) and approved by A. Brushlinskyi (1992). "Internally initiated activity" stands out among the main specific aspects of "autonomy", functionally manifested by a mechanism of conscious regulation. G. Prygin (2006) showed in his study that the "autonomous" type has the optimum structure of subject regulation than



its “dependent” counterpart. The author explains this by saying that “dependent” individuals have a structure of subject regulation that is void of integrity resulting in a decrease in the performance of their activities. This view is in keeping with our idea (L.Kolpakova, 2012) of subject regulation as an important mechanism of subjective adaptability. However, the work chiefly centers on the personal determination of regulatory activity, where subject regulation serves as the functional characteristic of the individual. Our hypothetical point of view is that regulatory activity belongs to the subject, reflecting the two most important components: understanding and activity which intersects with the experimental solutions of E.Sergeyenko (2013). She notes that a person sets the direction, meaning and value of interactions whereas the subject realizes personal choices according to individual resources. Given the ideas put forward by the researchers, from the standpoint of our hypothetical idea, “autonomy” and “sociotropy” being stable characteristics and integral properties, may predispose one to the manifestation of individual self-regulation resources. Foreign psychology, including the cognitive concept of A. Beck in particular, (1987) states that “autonomy”– “sociotropy” predispose one to depression depending on the type of stress that a person has experienced. The hypothesis put forward by him also verified that sociotropic people, having a high need for recognition and social support, are more vulnerable to interpersonal stress compared with autonomous people, whose worries are linked to personal achievements, the preservation of independence and freedom. It must be said that this idea of Beck has repeatedly been verified in other studies. Thus, M. Bruch., K. Rivet, R. Heimberg, F. Hunt, B. McIntosh (1999) in the article "Shyness and sociotropy" showed that the confirmation of Beck’s hypothesis is mainly relevant to sociotropic people only who are characterized by dysphoric or physiological stress responses to social and interpersonal excitors which results in the emergence of behavioral disturbances in the form of addictive behavior. In respect to autonomous people, Beck’s idea was not confirmed leaving room for further research. In addition, there are still many uncertainties in terms of how people cope with difficult situations with different levels of expression of the characteristics of “autonomy” and “sociotropy”. However, we propose to include these issues in the study of the adaptability subject the essence of which conveys the specifics of the regulatory activity of both adaptive and transformative nature with due regard to situational factors and individual personal development trends. An analysis of the scientific papers centering on the issue of studying the individual method of subject regulation shows that the problems in this area have become relevant but there is little research. It should be noted that the problem of subjective adaptability through the prism of sustainable indicators “autonomy”- “retrospective” as an individual way of regulation and self-regulation of behavior in difficult situations has not yet been investigated.

## **Conclusion**

It was found that a difficult life situation significantly influences on the specifics of differences in the individual structure of personality traits causing personality changes objectively manifested in the specifics of adaptive attitude.

It is shown that autonomy in general can be considered as one of the projections of subjective adaptability, reflecting a conscious self-regulation in overcoming negative internal and external influences and adapting to them in terms of the ability to ensure the security and development of oneself as an individual towards the set life goals.

It was revealed that in a difficult situation, “autonomous” individuals (with the autonomous orientation towards achievements) as well as “sociotropic” individuals(socio-oriented) have the likelihood of adhering to the coping types of both adaptive and transformative activity, but their application and effectiveness depends on the individual personality characteristics, specifics of individual resources and the choice of methods of self-regulation.

It is found that: 1) Preparedness to change and the feasibility of the stereotype of presentation is the most significant factor in relation to the position of the adaptive attitude to a difficult situation among “autonomous” subjects; individual resource determining the methods of regulatory activity being autonomy, awareness and activity;

2) “Sociotropic” subjects have a structure of adaptive attitudes to a difficult situation that is unstable; the individual resource of regulatory activity depends on the individual personality characteristics and indicators of emotional sphere instability:

- For persons belonging to the neurotic syndrometype, the most significant factor in the position of adaptive attitude to a difficult situation is “feasibility to change the stereotype of presentation” and a tendency to have acute worries giving rise to “pessimistic mindset; individual resources - search for social support”;

- For persons belonging to the anxiety-phobic syndrome type, the leading concept of adaptive relationship has not been designated; the argument for interpreting being the dependence on any strong personality that can satisfy the need for freedom from fear; the individual resource is the passive position; the choice of regulation is not significant;

- For persons belonging to the maladaptativereaction syndrome type, the concept of adaptive attitude to difficult situations is “multi-layered”; on the significance level it is associated with the “dependence on external affirmations”, “non-adaptive mobility”, “pessimistic mindset”, “unpreparedness to come to terms with a failure, correct the life strategies”; the individual resources of self – regulation “escape-avoidance”. The identified typological features of adaptability can extend the available scientific and practical understanding of the vulnerability and human security in difficult situations. The information here can be useful in practical terms for experts engaged in practical activities,

contribute to psychologists, physicians, researchers in their scientific pursuits, and other experts who research the problem of individual resources and individual variants of human adaptation.

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