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ОСОБИСТІСНІ ЧИННИКИ СХИЛЬНОСТІ ДО НЕГАТИВНОГО ЕСКАПІЗМУ СЕРЕД СТУДЕНТІВ УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ PERSONALITY PRECURSORS OF PRONENESS TO THE NEGATIVE ESCAPISM OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Проаналізовано підходи до концептуалізації поняття ескапізм в психології. З посиланнями на дослідження зарубіжних авторів, зокрема російських, розглянута можливість концептуалізації феномену негативного ескапізму як багатофункціональної копінг-стратегії типу «уникнення». Емпірично визначено особистісні передумови переживання студентами університету негативного ескапізму як копінг-стратегії типу «уникнення» і негативний вплив схильності до ескапізму цього типу на психологічне благополуччя і якість життя суб'єкта навчання.

Ключові слова: негативний ескапізм, копінг-стратегії, особистісні передумови, студенти університету, психологічне благополуччя.

Background. In the threatening conditions of COVID-19 Pandemic the quarantine regulations concerning the attendance of classes by full-time students appeared to tell negatively on the success of distance learning first of all of those students who before the quarantine also missed classes without favorable excuses. So, the types of coping defense mechanism, chosen consciously, and coping strategies of the avoidance type which are chosen consciously might be interpreted as a more or less stable feature of the personality than a situational behavioral manifestation. With reference to the research findings of a number of foreign researchers we substantiated the hypothesis that proneness to escapism can be identified as a specific coping strategy compatible with the strategies of avoidance, distancing and self-control which signal of the deficit of resources in the unsuccessful learners to act adequately under the present ecological conditions.

Method. Using a number of the contemporary techniques of assessing the individuals' coping resources and three personality characteristics such as: the sense of the life orientations, satisfaction with life, index of well-being, designed by C. Ryff and adopted to the Ukrainian culture at Dnipro University under the guidance of the authors of this paper, we conducted an empirical study to prove the hypothesis of the deficit in learners prone to the negative escapism of the recourses to cope with problems of life. The **sample** included 60 subjects – University students of psychology department, predominantly female.

Results. We have found differences between the individuals, which showed that the students prone to escapism give preference to the following coping strategies: distancing, avoidance and self-control - all the differences are statistically significant. Those prone to escapism appeared to display lower meaningfulness of life, lower involvement into the life process, lower efficacy of life as well as lower than non-escapists locus of self-control and the life control. We have discovered with the help of the "Life Satisfaction Test" that they drastically differ from non-escapists in the compatibility between the set aims and the achieved owns. Convincing differences were also found in the psychological well-being on all the scales.

Conclusion. The results obtained can be used for making individual programs for the escapists on how to increase the efficacy of their functioning as the subjects of their education acquisition and life in general.

Keywords: negative escapism, coping strategies, personal background, university students, psychological well-being.

Problem identification. In the contemporary unpredictably threatening ecological conditions of COVID-19 Pandemic, when the quarantine regulations concerning the attendance of classes by the full-time university students, announced at the end of the previous academic year and abandoned in Ukraine in the middle of September of the current year (alas, to be shortly renewed again), the individuals with proneness to escapism should become the objects of the special attention of the educators and practical psychologists. The thing is, the so-called negative escapism appeared to be not a merely situational characteristic feature of behavior, but a factor, which might play a more dramatic role in the personality functioning in the present conditions of life.

It is known that under the same conditions of life people might behave differently owing to the differences in their dispositional traits, the aims pursued in life, sense of the life and motivational orientations, the degree of involvement into the achieving of aims and other personality precursors, which determine the functioning of both unconscious defense mechanisms and consciously chosen coping strategies. The latter, as is known, can be either of the problem-focused type or the emotion-focused ones, indicative of anxiety, and those of the avoidance type, which might signal of the coping deficit in the individuals' cognitive resources.

We present in this paper a brief review of different approaches to the conceptualization of the phenomenon of "escapism", analyze various aspects of its manifestation, of which the negative form of escapism resembles the avoidance – type of coping strategy and appears to be quite often detrimental both for the individual's psychological well-being and the quality of life.

A brief review of the approaches to the conceptualization of escapism in psychology. The phenomenon of "escapism" attracted special attention of psychologists fairly recently in 1993, when it was included into the Encyclopedia of Psychology Research (Ayto, 1999) and later on into the fundamental international edition "Personality Psychology. Theory and assessment" (2008).

With reference to the mentioned above editions and the later publications it is reasonable to mention in the introductory part of this paper, that the phenomenon of escapism has already been investigated earlier in various contexts. For instance, the concept had been studied in the frameworks of the developmental psychology with reference to the children's dreams, till it became clear that proneness to escapism can be also manifested in the real world.

Russian researcher V.S. Mukhina (2004) defined the meaning of escapism as a form of adaptation of the individual to the subjectively difficult conditions of life. The author singled out two forms of escapism: "group escapism" and "autism" (an individual form of its manifestation). The term was also used by some authors to describe an individual form of escapism from the real world to the imaginary virtual one. Both forms of escapism, mentioned above, are indicative of the intention of the individual to get rid of the "difficult thoughts" and "unfavorable relations". V.S. Mukhina also stressed the point that although escapism might result in the danger for the individual of getting isolated from the society, it should be viewed as the phenomenon which accompanies the normal ontogenetic

development. Another Russian researcher D.A. Kutuzova (2010) defined escapism as a mean of solving the task of self-identification in the youth in a wide context, as she puts it, and as a defense mechanism – in a narrow context.

V.S. Ruchko (2012) defined escapism as a specific coping strategy manifested in the form of a situational role ascribed by the individual to oneself.

Other researchers demonstrated similar ambivalence of the views on escapism. They attached to escapism the function of the activity and interpreted it in the context of various individual hobbies, formed in the contemporary media-society.

Researchers singled out healthy and unhealthy forms of escapism which have important differences.

A special group of research investigations of escapism is represented by the finding related to the participation of the young people in the on-line role-playing activities and in the on-line games. The researcher H. Uee, using the author's own technique "Motivation of play inventory", has come to the conclusion that escapism is the predictor of the formation of the so-called "Internet play addiction". Later on other researchers (D. Hagstrom & V. Kaldo) (2014) carried out a research, which allowed to conclude that negative escapism played a much more dramatic role in the determination of distress and life dissatisfaction.

Polish researchers Kacz Marek, Drazkovsky (2014) found on a representative sample of 1056 individuals, that the computer-game players with the escapist motivation wasted much more time than the non-escapist youth on performing similar tasks.

The interpretation of proneness to escapism as a form of a psychological defense mechanism is referred to in some psychological tests designed for the assessment of the social disadaptation.

Thus researchers demonstrate similar ambivalence of views on escapism. Most of them attach to escapism the meaning of the form of behavior stimulated by the contemporary media.

On the basis of the above reviewed theoretical assumptions and empirical observations it seems possible to substantiate the hypothesis that proneness to the negative escapism is not simply a behavioral manifestation of the situationally determined conditions of functioning but a more or less stable personality characteristic feature, the formation of which might be determined by the deficit in the individual of the personality resources to function successfully in difficult life situations. It signals not only the appearance of coping problems, but might be also indicative of the deficit of the personality resources to cope with those problems.

So in this paper we intend to demonstrate that proneness to the negative escapism is likely to impact negatively both: the individual's psychological well-being and one's quality of life, since that form of escapism is indicative of the deficit of personality resources to cope successfully with major life tasks.

The objective of the present study and its results. We present below the description of the so-called deficitary model of proneness to the negative escapism, which is illustrated by the results of the empirical research carried out at the faculty

of psychology and special education of Dnipro National University since the beginning of COVID- 19 Pandemic.

The objective of the empirical study was to identify the likely psychological precursors of proneness to the negative escapism which fairly quickly appeared evident as the quarantine was announced and the day-students were allowed to continue studying on-line. We carried out a quasi-experimental research in which sixty students took part. Thirty of them showed particular interest in the phenomenon of escapism and even organized, at their own initiative, a group of escapist, the members of which contacted from time to time and discussed the results of the meeting of the International group of escapist in Kiev.

It quickly became clear that those students, who showed interest in escapism, had earlier been prone to miss classes without favorable excuses and appeared to differ from other students, called below “non-escapists”, first of all by their higher levels of resorting to such types of coping strategies, as avoidance and distancing as their habitual coping resources.

The data, presented in table 1, illustrate differences between the group of the individuals, prone to escapism (group 1), and the group without proneness to escapism (group 2), which are statistically significant for all the three basic coping strategies, compatible in meaning with escapism: a avoidance, distancing and self-control.

Table 1

Differences between the groups of the individuals prone to escapism (group 1) and non-escapists (group 2) in the frequency of using various coping strategies

Scales	Mean values		t-Student criterion
	group 1 (prone to escapism) (N=30)	group 2 (non-escapists) (N=30)	
Problem-focused coping	55	56	-0,77
Distancing	55	48	3,80*
Self-control	47	38	4,12*
Seeking social support	46	46	0,16
Avoidance	54	44	5,53*

**differences are valid at $p \leq 0,05$*

The differences are statistically significant between the compared groups of subjects prone to the negative escapism (group 1) and non-escapists (group 2) on all the three coping strategies compatible with negative escapism (distancing significant at $t=3,8$), self-control (significant at $t=4,12$), avoidance (significant at $t=5,53$). Those results convincingly prove the hypothesis that escapist much more frequently choose the strategy of “avoidance” than non-escapists. Escapist also demonstrate higher level of proneness to the choice of the self-control coping strategy, strategy of distancing and avoidance. Those data suggest that escapist possess higher tendency to avoid problems that may arise in their life activities, which makes the term “escapist” quite self-explanatory: escapist more frequently avoid problems than non-escapists.

Another interesting finding of the empirical research is connected with the analysis of the sense of the life orientations of the escapist. Their involvement into the process of life is lower than that of the non-escapists as well as meaningfulness of life, which negatively tells on the efficacy of their functioning.

According to the empirical data escapist have lower level of the locus of the life control as well as the locus of the self-control. The differences (as shown in table 2) are statistically significant for all but one scales of the sense of the life orientations (see table 2).

Table 2

Inter-group differences in the Sense of the life orientations

Scales	Mean values		t- Student criterion
	group 1 (prone to escapism) (N=30)	group 2 (non-escapists) (N=30)	
Meaningfulness of life	85	96	-2,72*
Goals in life	28	30	-1,40
Life process	24	28	-3,09*
Life efficacy	21	23	-2,58*
Locus of the self-control	18	19	-2,49*
Locus of the life-control	24	27	-2,41*

*differences are valid at $p \leq 0,05$ as assessed with the help of the questionnaire "Sense of the life orientations" (by D. O. Leontiyev)

The data presented in table 2 also illustrate that the achievement of success in life by the individuals, prone to escapism, is hindered by the pertinence to them in comparison with non-escapists of the lower level of the meaningfulness of life, lower level of the involvement into the process of life, lower level efficacy of life, as well as the locus of self-control and the locus of the life control. This negatively tells not only on their sense of the life orientations as a significant component of the quality of life but on the satisfaction with life. Even the aims of the life seem to be not clearly realized by escapist.

There is no wonder that the mentioned results are supported by the empirical data concerning life satisfaction (see table 3).

Table 3

Inter-group differences in life satisfaction between the individuals prone to escapism and non-escapists

Scales	Mean values		t- Student criterion
	group 1 (prone to escapism) (N=30)	group 2 (non-escapists) (N=30)	
Interest in life	5,0	5,3	-0,77
The order of the aims achievement	6,0	5,1	1,79
Compatibility between the chosen aims and the achieved ones	2,9	5,6	-5,75*
Positive self-appraisal	5,2	5,3	-0,15
Overall mood	4,1	5,1	-1,67
Life satisfaction index	23,3	26,5	-1,82

*differences are valid at $p \leq 0,05$

The data presented in table 3 show that the achievement of success in life by the individuals prone to escapism is hindered by the pertinence to them not-only of the lower level of the meaningfulness of life, but also of the low compatibility between the chosen aims and the achieved ones, as well as the insufficient involvement into the process of life, which is evident from the data in table 3.

That is why the escapists, according to the presented empirical data, also differ significantly from the non-escapists on their psychological well-being (see table 4).

Table 4 shows the concluding aspect chosen by us for the investigation of the personality differences in psychological well-being between escapists and non-escapists.

Table 4

Differences between the group of the individuals prone to escapism and non-escapists on their psychological well-being

Scales	Mean values		t- Student criterion
	group 1 (prone to escapism) (N=30)	group 2 (non-escapists) (N=30)	
Positive relations with other people	55	58	-1,47
Autonomy	55	58	-1,47
Environmental mastery	47	57	-5,29*
Orientation to the personal growth	56	60	-2,09*
Awareness of the aims of life	52	61	-4,37*
Self-acceptance	46	57	-3,91*
Psychological well-being	313	354	-4,10*

*differences are valid at $p \leq 0,05$, as assessed with the help of the questionnaire by C. Ryff, adapted to the Ukrainian culture by E. Nosenko, O. Znanetskaya

It is necessary to stress the point that we investigated only negative escapism. So escapists appear to have many negative and considerably less positive characteristic features of their personalities, which certainly deserve a deeper analysis and further studies on various and more numerous samples.

So far with reference to the data presented in this paper it is possible to conclude that the individuals prone to escapism have lower indicants as compared to non-escapists practically on all the seven aspects of the psychological well-being, five of which significantly differ from the characteristic features of non-escapists, namely: environmental mastery; orientation to the personal growth; awareness of the aims of life; self-acceptance and the overall value of psychological well-being. There seems to be probably one personality precursor of escapists which tells positively on their functioning: it is the agreement between the aims which they set and the aims which are achieved. It seems to be encouraging for escapists.

Conclusion. We have defined in this paper most of the personality precursors of the negative escapism, namely: resorting to the avoidance type of coping strategies; several aspects of their sense of the life orientations: insufficient meaningfulness of life, insufficient orientation to the process of life, low life efficacy and the lower locus of control of the self and the life, environmental mastery and others.

The results obtained can be used for making individual programs for the escapist on how to increase the efficacy of their functioning as the subjects of their education acquisition and life in general. But there seems to be an agreement between the aims that they set and the aims that they strive to achieve, which deserves appreciation. The overall conclusion is that being an escapist means depriving oneself of the chances to achieve psychological well-being.

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