
Work in Progress

THE HOME ENVIRONMENT AS A RESOURCE OF COPING BEHAVIOUR IN YOUTH

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Abstract

In the following paper we discuss the resource approach to coping behavior. We emphasize that parameters of the home environment (home attachment, functionality and relevance of the home environment) can be considered major resources of a personality's coping in youth (along with different resources of coping behaviour – personal, cognitive, social, cultural and others). They are the underlying parameters forming a home environment image. The sample consisted of 344 participants (267 females and 77 males), students of different faculties of the Higher School of Economics. We used the Functionality of the Home Environment Questionnaire, the Relevance of the Home Environment Questionnaire, the Home Attachment Questionnaire, and the Ways of Coping Questionnaire. The results of the factor analysis allowed us to select a positive image of the home environment based on the parameters of functionality and the relevance of the home environment, as well as home attachment. These parameters are an important resource for coping behaviour in youth. The results of the correlation analysis showed that a positive image of the home environment is correlated with efficient strategies of self-control, seeking social support, planned problem solving, and positive reappraisal, and also with an inefficient strategy of confrontive coping. The study's results can be used in psychological counseling to form individual profiles of the home environment preferences. They can be helpful in modeling or altering home spaces in accordance with a person's needs and expectations and therefore, use the home environment as one of the main resources for coping behaviour and psychological well-being.

Keywords: functionality and relevance, home environment, home attachment, coping behaviour.

The Research Approach to Coping Behaviour

Coping behaviour plays an important role in solving difficult life situa-

tions. Recently many psychologists have explained coping behaviour according to the resource approach. This approach assumes the existence of specific resources that help a personality to

overcome difficulties (Holahan & Moos, 1987; Folkman & Lazarus, 1998; Frydenberg, 2004; Belinskaya, 2009; Khachaturova, 2012).

Coping resources can predict the choice of *coping strategies*: the ways of an individual's behavior in a difficult situation to protect themselves from the harmful effects of stressors. There are different classifications of coping behaviour. The main criteria for the coping strategies systematization are the focus of a personality's coping actions, the intensity of coping actions, the adaptability of the chosen coping strategies, and the modality of strategies.

On the basis of the intensity of coping actions S. Maddi divides all coping strategies into two groups: active coping and passive coping (with the use of inefficient strategies assumed) (Maddi, 1999).

On the basis of the adaptability and modality of coping strategies E. Heim suggests considering emotional, cognitive, and behavioural strategies. These types of coping strategies can be adaptive, relatively adaptive and non-adaptive in different situations (Heim, 1988).

On the basis of the criterion of the focus of a personality's coping actions researchers consider strategies aimed at either the situation itself or at a personality (Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Folkman & Lazarus, 1998; Amirkhan, 1999).

J. Amirkhan classifies responses to a specific stressor into three coping-strategies: problem solving, seeking social support, and avoidance (Amirkhan, 1999).

R. Lazarus and S. Folkman emphasize two types of coping responses: emotion-focused and problem-focused

strategies. When a person assesses a situation as being under control, he or she uses problem-focused strategies. If a person realizes that they cannot influence circumstances and change them, the person chooses emotionally-focused or avoidance strategies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1998). In terms of this classification they designed a questionnaire to measure of coping processes applied in a particular stressful encounter that involves eight scales. We regard this questionnaire as the most valid and relevant for our research.

Some studies show that the issue of *coping strategies efficacy* is rather disputable.

A number of scholars find escape-avoidance strategy inefficient (Heim, 1988; Amirkhan, 1999; Frydenberg, 2004). K. Nakano contests this opinion and assumes that inefficient strategies represent coping that focuses on the decrease of emotional tension instead of a focus on problem solving (Nakano, 1991).

E. Frydenberg suggests that people who choose the coping strategy of planned problem solving better adjust to changing circumstances (Frydenberg, 2004). The use of active cognitive strategies increases a person's control of a situation and, as a result, decreases his or her negative emotions (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001). The choice of emotional strategies, on the contrary, is connected with anxiety and depressive positions (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000).

According to these studies and R. Lazarus and S. Folkman's classification, in our research we consider confrontive coping, distancing, and escape-avoidance strategies as inefficient

strategies while self-control, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, planned problem solving, and positive reappraisal are regarded as efficient strategies.

All the means that individuals use to overcome difficulties, in other words the whole of personal, cognitive, social, physical, cultural, valuable, and environmental factors and opportunities, which a personality can consciously use to overcome difficult circumstances can be considered as *coping resources*. The resources can be actualizing and used by a personality or can remain in a potential state. In addition, it is important to consider a system of resources, its flexibility and the “weight” of each resource in this system (Folkman & Lazarus, 1998).

Researchers have examined a wide range of resources, both environmental and personal. Typical environmental coping resources include social bonding, instrumental, moral and emotional support from the social environment, as well as material, spiritual, and cultural resources. Personal resources are individual skills and abilities such as confidence, stress monitoring and tension reduction abilities, physical health, an ability to engage in problem-solving and structuring, optimism, hardiness, and self-efficacy (Seligman, 1992; Maddi, 1999; Aycock, 2011).

Personal and environmental coping resources are highly predictive of psychological well-being and choices of coping strategies. For instance, several studies show that high social support resourcefulness is associated with task-focused or positive coping styles (Lewin & Sager, 2008).

Along with foregoing environmental resources, parameters of the home

environment can serve as essential coping resources.

The home environment as a resource for coping behaviour in youth

The home environment has a significant place in maintaining and strengthening a personality's stability and well-being.

In a number of studies the home environment has been investigated as a social phenomenon and as a foundation for the family climate or family identity. Some studies (for instance, in the psychology of consumer motivation and behavior) only deal with physical attributes of home environment and their influence on household activity: housing type, affordable housing, space-time characteristics such as proximity and accessibility (Bonnes & Bonaiuto, 2002).

Thus, there are many ways aimed to evaluate the material resources of the home environment, but relatively few methods assess the psychological resources of the home environment for individuals (except for some initial inventories developed decades ago for the home environment evaluation) (Heft, 2003).

At the same time people with unstable minds may be especially sensitive to everyday stress caused by uncomfortable, messy, and cramped housing. Adverse home environments strongly contribute to suicidal behaviors.

Our research is based on the approach that there is no universal home environment suitable to each individual. Hence, it is necessary to identify the functionality of the home environment, which is adaptive, psychotherapeutic,

and friendly for its inhabitants, and thereby can be considered as a coping resource. The home environment as a resource for coping behaviour provides a person with information, social, and physical support, and a sense of stability.

Considering parameters of the home environment as a coping resource we based this study on the principles of ecological psychology. Relations between a person and the environment are settled through a number of levels (Nartova-Bochaver, Bochaver, Dmitrieva, & Reznichenko, 2016):

1. The pre-psychological level is specified by the quality of housing – its location, metric area, whether it is temporary or permanent for inhabitants, and so on.

2. The object level is set by the physical qualities of the home as a living environment. They are presented in **the functionality of the home environment**, in other words, in whether the environment efficiently meets challenges, for which the house was designed, built or purchased. Originally, home functions are usually adaptive.

The more functions there are, the friendlier a home becomes as a living environment. However, this condition is not sufficient to evaluate a house. Sometimes the inhabitants do not use definite functions; therefore, it is necessary to know what functions are important for inhabitants to use. Besides, the congruence of a home environment to a person's needs can be described by the theory of affordances and friendly environment (Coolen, 2006).

3. The intermediate subject-object level is specified by the degree of relevance between home functions and the inhabitants' needs. It means that these

home functions can satisfy their needs. The more **relevant a home environment** is, the higher the home friendliness.

4. The subject level is set by deep personal feelings, meanings, and attitudes to the house and is presented by **home attachment**.

Home attachment is a positive emotional connection between an individual and the house. A person who is attached to home prefers the house to other places; he or she desires to live in the house, to come back home. Home attachment is associated with a personality's meaning and values, socio-cultural and information processes. Hence, home attachment affects psychological health, and well-being and can be considered a coping resource (Williams & Stewart, 1998; Lewicka, 2011).

The influence of home environment on coping behaviour can be age sensitive. For example, R. Hay found that home attachment in childhood was more durable than at adult stage. But in adults the strength of home attachment tends to increase (Hay, 1998). In youth, home environment is especially significant for an individual as this period is characterized by quarter-life crisis, first experiences of romantic relations, and separation from home.

Emotional connection with home itself does not provide an individual with any coping resources, but at the psychological level there is a 'promise' of safety in our attitude towards home as to something usual, familiar and pleasant (Kankotan, 2008). Home detachment negatively influences both the process of adaptation to a new place, and the development of coping strategies in the situation of significant place loss (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003).

There have been few studies of the connections between the parameters of the home environment that might form positive or negative images of the home environment and coping behaviour.

R. Gifford and colleagues suggest that place attachment is correlated with the choice of coping strategies, which assumes positive reappraisal of threatening events and the use of places and place attachment enhancing the coping (Gifford et al., 2009).

The low functionality of the home environment, stress and emotional tension can decrease a person's ability to overcome difficulties and to use active coping strategies. For example, P. Lercher and colleagues emphasize that noise sensitivity has been linked to a coping style based on escape and avoidance (Lercher, Evans, Meis, & Kofler, 2002). On the contrary, the high functionality and relevance of the home environment that may manifest in opportunities for healthy development, physical activity, and a creative and collaborative atmosphere in home correlate with efficient coping strategies (Clayton, 2012).

Current study

Despite the growing interest to the relationships between individuals and their home environment, the psychological resources of the home environment are rarely studied.

Thus, we hypothesize: *A positive image of the home environment is connected with the choice of efficient coping strategies, such as self-control, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, planned problem solving, and positive reappraisal. The markers of a positive home image are the functionality and*

relevance of the home environment, as well as home attachment.

Method

To test this hypothesis, we have conducted an empirical study using four questionnaires.

Participants. The sample included 344 participants (267 females and 77 males), students of different faculties of the Higher School of Economics (the median age was 19.1, SD = 7.8).

Materials. To study the main variables we have used the following questionnaires.

1. The Functionality of the Home Environment Questionnaire objectively measures the existing functionality of the home environment, in other words, opportunities that a house provides for its residents. It includes four scales: Development, Stability, Protection, and Pragmatism (Nartova-Bochaver, Dmitrieva, Reznichenko, & Kuznetsova, 2015). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of all scales in our research is from 0.72 to 0.91, in the original research – from 0.75 to 0.89.

2. The Relevance of the Home Environment Questionnaire reflects the extent of the home environment relevance to the needs of its inhabitants. It consists of seven scales: Management of the Home Environment, Ergonomics, Home Detachment, Plasticity, Historicity, Potential, and Self-Presentation (Nartova-Bochaver et al., 2015). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of all scales in our research varies from 0.71 to 0.87, in the original research – from 0.69 to 0.88.

3. The Home Attachment Questionnaire has one scale that reflects the overall level of home attachment and

emotional intimacy between an individual and the house (Reznichenko, Nartova-Bochaver, & Kuznetsova, 2016). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient in our research is 0.91, in the original research it equals 0.93.

4. R. Lazarus and S. Folkman's Ways of Coping Questionnaire (in the adaptation of Kryukova & Kyftyak, 2007) defines coping mechanisms and strategies. The questionnaire includes eight subscales: Confrontive Coping, Distancing, Self-Control, Seeking Social Support, Accepting Responsibility, Escape-Avoidance, Planned Problem Solving, and Positive Reappraisal. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of all scales in our research varies from 0.69 to 0.86, in the original research – from 0.62 to 0.92.

Procedure. Respondents filled in the questionnaires individually and anonymously.

Results

We used SPSS 21.0 for statistical data processing. To test our hypothesis we used factor and correlation analyses.

We used a correlation coefficients from 0.3 to 0.9 for the following factor analysis. We used Principle Component Analyses (PCA). One component was selected based on Kaiser Criterion and the Scree Plot (Figure 1).

The results of orthogonal and oblique rotation of components are shown in Table 1. Thus, based on the results of orthogonal rotation we have selected one group of variables: a positive image of the home environment. This component explains 80% of the dispersion and has eleven variables: Pragmatism, Development, Stability, Protection, Management of the Home Environment, Potential, Self-Presentation, Ergonomics, Plasticity, Historicity, and Home Attachment.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test (KMO) shows that our model is appropriate as the significance is 0.919.

To test our hypothesis we correlated factor loadings and the choice of coping strategies (Table 2).

Our results after the correction on multiple testing significance by Bonferroni inequality show that a positive image of the home environment is associated with the strategies of

Figure 1

The Scree Plot of Eigen values after Principle Component Analyses

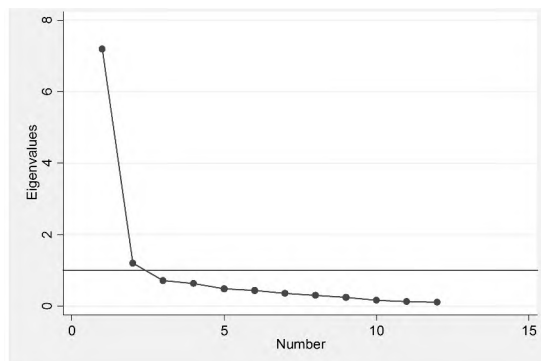


Table 1

The Results of Principle Component Analyses, Orthogonal and Oblique Rotation

Variables	Component 1 (Orthogonal Rotation)	Component 1 (Oblique Rotation)
Pragmatism	.689	
Development	.747	.724
Stability	.688	.600
Protection	.766	.801
Management of the Home Environment	.685	.608
Potential	.746	.689
Self-Presentation	.839	.918
Ergonomics	.827	.892
Home Detachment		
Plasticity	.773	.906
Historicity	.653	.745
Home Attachment	.755	.783

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficient between the Images of Home Environment and the Choice of Coping Strategies

Variables	A positive image of the home environment	A positive image of the home envi- ronment (Bonferroni Inequality)
Confrontive Coping	.394**	.394*
Distancing	.182	.182
Self-Control	.452**	.452*
Seeking Social Support	.412**	.412*
Accepting Responsibility	.305*	.305
Escape-Avoidance	.090	.090
Planned Problem Solving	.516**	.516*
Positive Reappraisal	.391**	.391*

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Confrontive Coping, Self-Control, Seeking Social Support, Planned Problem Solving, and Positive Reappraisal. Thus, the research hypothesis has been partially confirmed since a positive image of the

home environment was not connected with the efficient strategy of Accepting Responsibility and was correlated with the strategy of Confrontive Coping, which we considered an inefficient strategy.

Discussion

The meaning of our results is open to a number of interpretations. We predicted and found partial support for the hypothesis that a positive image of the home environment is correlated with the choice of efficient coping strategies.

Our results show that a positive image of the home environment is positively correlated with efficient strategies of Self-Control, Seeking Social Support, Planned Problem Solving, and Positive Reappraisal and with the inefficient strategy of Confrontive coping.

Our results are consistent with several prior investigations. When young people are confronted with difficulties, a positive home environment helps them to relax and provides the environmental resources to think about these problems, accept their responsibility, reappraise the situation, and find the way to overcome difficulties and solve problems (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). A number of studies also suggest that a positive home environment helps to build life plans, structure the experience and life events, and control of difficult situations (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Hence, when young people are faced with problems they have to use efficient strategies of Self-Control and but, for example, not Escape-Avoidance, because they know that they cannot avoid the situation.

But for all that, the strategy of Confrontive Coping is correlated with a positive image of the home environment. This result is partially contrary to a number of studies suggesting that home attachment is a resource for psychological health and well-being (Williams & Stewart, 1998; Lewicka, 2011). Our results show that an extra

high level of home attachment can be dysfunctional in youth. In a young person the dependence on the home environment may stimulate the feeling of hostility towards the outside world and other people and force them to prefer confrontive strategies. However, we assume that sometimes a negative home environment helps a person to overcome dysfunctional relations and conflicts and in that way it can be an important element of learning to cope with difficult life situations.

We could not select a negative image of the home environment using our results. A possible reason might be the fact that all home functions we had chosen for our analysis were originally adaptive. We suggest that studying of other parameters of the home environment in our future research might help us to select a negative image of the home environment and investigate its correlation with the choice of coping strategies.

To give an example, we predict that a negative image of the home environment might positively correlate with strategies of Distancing and Escape-Avoidance. We assume that several reasons may contribute to forming a negative image of the home environment in youth. When a person becomes an adult, they want to separate from their parents, and to have their own house. Usually young people cannot afford it and have to live in their parents' house, which does not meet their own needs, desires, and plans. Besides, young people, when moving from other towns and entering university, often have to live in dormitories and compete with roommates for living space. Poor domestic comforts, the low functionality and relevance of the home environment, and

home detachment decrease the confidence in their own abilities to cope with difficulties and lead to the choice of the Avoidance strategy. This notion is consistent with the results of other studies (Brown et al., 2003).

The present study had several **limitations**. Firstly, the ambiguous correlation between a positive image of the home environment and some coping strategies could be explained by the fact that our sample includes both respondents who come from Moscow and respondents who live in dormitories. Probably, this factor may be considered in our future studies to help specify the resourcefulness of the home environment in coping with difficult situations.

Secondly, to broaden the understanding of the relationship between parameters of the home environment and a person's choice of coping strategy, it is important to investigate this issue not only regarding youth, but also regarding other age groups (childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and elderly age).

Thus, our research allows us to make the following **conclusions**.

1. The functionality and relevance of the home environment, as well as

home attachment are the markers of a positive home image. These parameters of the home environment function as an important resource for coping behaviour in youth.

2. The research hypothesis has been partially confirmed as a positive image of the home environment is correlated with efficient strategies of self-control, seeking social support, planned problem solving, and positive reappraisal, and also with the inefficient strategy of confrontive coping.

The study's results can be used in psychological counseling to form individual profiles of the home environment preferences. They can help to model or change home space in accordance with a person's needs and expectations and therefore use the home environment as one of the main resources for coping behaviour and psychological well-being.

We hope that other scholars will extend our findings by focusing on additional aspects of the resourcefulness of the home environment – age, gender, cultural, material, and others. Further research is needed to determine the generalization of these findings.

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Домашняя среда как ресурс совладающего поведения в юношеском возрасте

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Резюме

В статье обсуждается ресурсный подход к совладающему поведению. Подчеркивается, что наряду с личностными, инструментальными, социальными и другими ресурсами совладающего поведения элементы домашней среды – функциональность и релевантность домашней среды, а также привязанность к дому, могут быть рассмотрены в качестве важнейших ресурсов совладающего поведения в юношеском возрасте. Данные элементы лежат в основе формирования образа дома. В исследовании приняли участие 344 респондента: 267 девушек и 77 юношей, студенты различных факультетов НИУ «Высшая школа экономики». Были использованы следующие опросники: «Функциональность домашней среды», «Релевантность домашней среды», «Привязанность к дому» и «Опросник способов совладания» Р. Лазаруса и С. Фолкман в адаптации Т.Л. Крюковой и Е.В. Куфтык. Результаты факторного анализа позволили выделить позитивный образ дома, основываясь на параметрах функциональности и релевантности домашней среды, а также привязанности к ней. Эти параметры являются важным ресурсом совладающего поведения

в юношеском возрасте. Результаты корреляционного анализа показали, что позитивный образ дома связан с выбором эффективных стратегий самоконтроля, поиска социальной поддержки, планирования решения проблем и позитивной переоценки, а также с неэффективной стратегией конфронтационного копинга. Результаты исследования могут быть использованы в психологическом консультировании для создания индивидуальных профилей предпочтений домашней среды. Они могут помочь в моделировании или изменении домашнего пространства в соответствии с потребностями и ожиданиями личности, позволяя, таким образом, использовать домашнюю среду как важнейший ресурс совладающего поведения и психологического благополучия личности.

Ключевые слова: функциональность и релевантность домашней среды, привязанность к дому, совладающее поведение.

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Сфера научных интересов: социальная психология, психология конфликта, психология совладающего поведения.

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