

Creation of Coping-Profiles of Managers for Obtaining Methods of Coping in Socially Significant Situations during Negotiations

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Abstract: Professional activity of managers, entrepreneurs and other persons who often enter into negotiations implies high density of difficulties and problem situations. This study explored whether social and psychological peculiarities of personality preferred negotiating styles and response to ambiguity may be determinants of productive coping behaviour. The authors surveyed 105 managers of medium and large-sized business aged from 23 to 59. The average age of the respondents is 35.37 years. The study measured an adaptive level of coping strategies by E. Heim's Coping Questionnaire, peculiarities of personality by 5PFQ P. Costa and R. McCrae, preferred negotiating styles and response to ambiguity. Results suggested that adaptive coping strategies more frequently used by less anxious, emotionally healthy managers who in dealing with colleagues and subordinates show respect, willingness to understand and accept the other's point of view, comparative to non-adaptive or relatively adaptive coping strategies using managers with high anxiety, emotional instability and less developed communication skills. It was found the correlation between preferences of the negotiation styles and personality characteristics of respondents. Managers who use adaptive behavioural coping techniques in socially significant and stressful situations are characterized by a higher degree of respect for the people around them ($p < 0.001$), greater emotional relaxation ($p < 0.001$). These social and psychological characteristics may be considered as the determinants of a person's use of adaptive coping ways under challenging situations and more or less serve as a guarantee for their successful overcoming.

Keywords: Negotiations, negotiating styles, coping strategies, managers, personality characteristics.

INTRODUCTION

The researchers in spheres of psychology, sociology, management and economics have recently demonstrated a significant increase of interest towards study of a person's behaviour in the process of negotiations at different levels: from family to international stage. Ability to negotiate is considered a success factor in any sphere of our life. There is an explanation: negotiations is one of the eldest types of a person's activity aimed to success and prosperity when favourable terms are achieved or to survival during conflict management. Negotiating skills are required in all spheres of social communication with people: at the workplace, at home, on vacations, in the shop etc. Sometimes, in all situations, we need to come to a kind of agreement to achieve our own goals and implement our own interests. The main riddle lies in answering the following questions: Is there the most effective behavioural strategy for negotiating? In which strategy and where the price of a mistake is very high? What helps people to choose the most optimal way for the solution of an emerging problem? What are the obstacles to such a choice? Search for answers to these and similar questions is performed in various directions.

In this article, you will find the study of social and psychological determinants of adaptive coping behaviour during negotiations within the framework of the resource-based view. Therefore, certain personality traits and behavioural patterns are considered as individual differences that enhance arresting and preventing the consequence of job stress and guarantee successful stress coping during a socially significant situation of business communication. The obtained results may be valuable for further development of a selection process for managerial positions with priority given to such persons who are able to carry on constructive dialogue and achieve mutually profitable results in socially significant situations of negotiations. The real facts of modern life (rush pace of life, enormous flows of various information that require processing and understanding, the necessity to maintain and establish a large number of social connections, instability of social and economic situation) often make living conditions of a modern person extreme [1]. Under the influence of these extreme conditions or in the process of solution of socially significant problems, the most common mental state of a person is stress [2, 3].

Professional activity of persons who often enter into negotiations (for example, politicians, managers, entrepreneurs) implies a high density of difficult and problem situations. Such situations, face forces them to manage stress instantaneously and immediately make adequate decisions. Search for successful strategies of

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coping with difficulties in socially significant situations, upon which the welfare of huge masses of people may depend, is a perspective direction of social psychology. The ways a person manages stressful situations are called coping strategies (or coping behaviour) according to Nartova-Bochaver S.K. [4] and Lazarus R.S. [5]. Based on the literature review, we can assert that today, there are about 26 types of coping strategies united according to one of the numerous Heim's [6] classifications into three groups:

1. Cognitive strategies of coping behaviour focused on rational attitude towards the situation: for example, on problem analysis, preservation of self-control, making sense or depreciation of ongoing events, submission, disregard etc. Strategies of analysis and active solution of problems are considered by the researchers as one of the most effective ones [7]; at the same time, strategies of avoidance and depreciation are regarded as questionable ones, according to Chang Y., and Edwards J. K. [8].
2. Emotional strategies: for example, suppression of emotions or emotional release, aggressiveness or self-accusation, protest or obedience. As opposed to rational ways of behaviour in stressful socially significant situations, the "emotional" strategies are considered as low-effective. However, the recent studies demonstrate that many people gain success in critical situations mainly due to emotional uplift and splash of energy, according to Losoya, S., Eisenberg, N., and Fabes, R.A. [9] and Byrne O. and Shepherd D. A. [10].
3. Behavioural coping strategies: search for social support, abstraction, compensation, active avoidance etc. Pearlin L.I. and Schooler C. [11] emphasize, that strategy of the search for the support of powerful persons is considered the most effective among them, and compensation is considered the most destructive way of overcoming disagreements.

The approaches existing in researches of a person's coping behaviour may be divided into two types: strategies oriented to a problem solution and strategies oriented to a person's adaptation to the problem. It is noted that the simultaneous use of several ways of coping is more effective than the selection of the unique way of responding to the situation [12]. For the last 60 years quite a few works

have been published, which covered the problem of coping behavior, according to Haan N. [13], Pearlin, L., and Schooler, L. [11], Baum, A. [14], Folkman S. [15], Nartova-Bochaver S.K. [4], Lazarus R.S. [5], Kryukova T.L. [16], and many others [17]. Understanding of essence and mechanisms of coping strategies differs among the researchers. However, many of them acknowledge that coping strategies are an essential internal resource of a person, which – on condition of constructive use – may enhance successful coping with difficulties. The main idea and goal of the study reviewed in this article correspond to a resource-based view on coping behaviour, according to which coping mechanisms are perceived as demonstrations of individual differences that support preventing and arresting of stress and are spare and resource capacities of a person [18-21].

An internal resource, his abilities to cope with his emotions and behaviour, and create meaningful communication are challenging in the process of solution of socially significant issues, for example, during negotiations. Despite the fact that negotiating process has been thoroughly studied by Allakhverdova I.A. and Karpenko A.D.; Fisher R. and Ury W.; Mastenbroek W.F.G., Nierenberg G.I.; Cellich C. and Jain S.C.; Baguley Ph., there are such obstacles on the way to agreed solution of problem issues as differences in world-view, values, prescribed behaviour and emotional reaction in various cultures and many other factors.

As of today, scientists perform an active search for universal psychological resources of a person that enhance coping in extremal, professionally difficult and socially significant situations, according to Khotinets V.Yu. [22]. These resources may include some personal and professional traits and social settings [23]. The most similar to the topic of the present study are the researches devoted to the interrelation between effective supervision, development of a leader's personality, and determining the factors of such development. According to A.L. Zhuravlev [24], "...efficiency of supervision in many aspects depends on how the personal traits of a leader are arranged in his personality substructures..." Bondarenko M.A. [25] emphasize that among such factors adaptive mobility, sociability, the factor of social functions and roles integration, leadership, level of competence and scope of knowledge can be named. The state hypothesis of the study is a presumption that there are determinants of productive coping behaviour, which may be determined among social and psychological

peculiarities of personality, preferred negotiating styles and response to ambiguity.

The present study is mainly focused on the interrelation between adaptive, non-adaptive and conventionally adaptive coping strategies and social and psychological peculiarities of personality, selection of negotiating strategy and response to ambiguity. Coping-strategies, negotiating styles, social and psychological personality peculiarities of middle and initial managers and response to ambiguity are the subject of research interest. The purpose of the study is to identify the determinants of productive coping behaviour as a resource for managing significant situations during negotiations. For this, there is a need to study the profiles of managers who use adaptive ways of coping may be explained by the influence of the corporate culture of those industrial enterprises.

METHODOLOGY

The study was performed in the form of the survey consisting of a questionnaire and tests for determination of negotiating style, coping strategies, personal peculiarities and response to ambiguity. Our sample included 105 middle and initial managers of medium and large-sized business from Russian enterprises as JSC Kirovsky Zavod (The Kirov Plant), Spika-Metall Ltd., MorNefteGazStroy Ltd., Marine Complex Systems Ltd. etc. aged from 23 to 59 years, and the average age was equal to 35.37 years (SD = 8.47). Gender composition: women – 54%, men – 46%. All managers who were interested in participation took part in the study on a voluntary basis. Each participant had the opportunity to learn the goal, tasks and procedure of the study and to withdraw his or her participation in the experiment at any moment after reading and signing the informed consent for participation. At the preliminary stage of the study all potential participants filled in the candidate's questionnaire where they put some personal data (gender, age, position, and work experience), frequency of their participation in negotiations and significance level of the decisions adopted during these negotiations. The participant's questionnaire consisted of the following forms:

1. "Self-esteem of business communication" test by N.I. Leonov [26] was used for the identification of dominant negotiating styles;
2. "Methodology for psychological diagnosis of coping mechanisms" by E. Heim [6] adjusted by

L.I. Vasserman was used for identification of adaptive and non-adaptive variants of coping behaviour;

3. "The Big Five Personality Traits questionnaire" by R. McCrae and P. Costa (5PFQ) adjusted by A.B. Khromov [27] was used for evaluation of individual psychological peculiarities of personality;
4. S. Budner's "Scale of Tolerance – Intolerance of Ambiguity" adjusted by T.V. Kornilova and M.A. Chumakova [28] was used for diagnostics of ambiguity tolerance.

The questionnaire form for participants contained the following instruction: "Thank you for participating in the study conducted by the Department of Psychology of Saint Petersburg State University, which aims to study managers' concept of effective management qualities. You are kindly asked to fill in four tests in accordance with the enclosed instructions. This procedure will take 20 to 25 minutes of your work time. Please try to remember the way you mainly manage challenging and stressful situations and situations of high emotional strain at your workplace. When answering the questions, please use the recent experience of your management with difficult situations at your workplace. Please do not consider your answer for a long time – your first reaction is important. Using modern studies as a support, we set the goal to reveal social and psychological determinants of productive coping behaviour during a socially significant situation of business communication among persons whose professional activity implies participation in negotiations regularly. That is to say; we wanted to learn which competencies can be a key factor for gaining success, for example, in negotiations. To achieve the set goal, we divided our study into several stages:

1. Preliminary stage.
2. Questionnaire stage: Main task: data collection, support and consulting for participants of the study in the process of filling in the questionnaires;
3. Results processing. Main task: primary and statistical data processing, the revelation of significant interrelations;
4. Final stage. Main task: the creation of generalized reports for employers, individual reports for each of the participants, the creation

of generalized coping-profile for all managers under study.

For data processing, we applied a computer program R v3.3.3 for Windows with use of the following methods:

1. Descriptive statistics with the calculation of median value, 25 and 75 quartiles;
2. Frequency analysis;
3. Tukey's pairwise comparisons method with correction of significance level and generalization;
4. Regression analysis (method of logistic regression) with the application of the Kruskal–Wallis test.

In the process of the study, 105 participants took part in negotiations not less than once in a month and assessed the significance of solutions adopted at these negotiations as above the average level.

RESULTS

For primary evaluation of how frequent adaptive, conventionally adaptive and non-adaptive coping strategies are used, we performed data frequency analysis (Table 1), which displays the most popular three coping strategies of every type.

Managers in their professional activity are inclined to demonstrate behaviour aimed for analysis of the

emerging difficulties and possible ways of solving them. Besides, thorough planning of problem-solving steps is accompanied by a high degree of self-control and cognitive re-assessment of how valuable is overcoming of one or another situation significant for a person. The managers participating in our study most frequently use such emotional reaction in a difficult situation as a positive feeling of confidence in a solution of difficult and socially significant situations. The less popular though encountered among three winning positions of the rating of emotional reactions are suppression of negative emotions and feelings as well as a delegation of responsibility for problems solution to surrounding persons. According to the obtained data of frequency analysis, managers in their professional activity prefer adaptive behaviour aimed for establishing cooperation with more experienced persons and experience exchange that enhances overcoming of difficulties. At the same time, we have to mention a tendency for selection of such non-adaptive behavioural coping strategy as "retreat" that implies inclination for various ways of escaping from a direct solution of problem situations.

All in all, we need to mention that middle managers demonstrate a tendency for the use of adaptive coping strategies in cognitive, emotional and behavioural spheres of mental activity. Such strategies are key-factor for successful overcoming of socially significant stressful situations, which the managers regularly face in their professional activity. However, our study is not only focused on the identification of modern tendencies in coping behaviour preferred by the managers. In order to find social and psychological determinants of

Table 1: Frequency Analysis of Preferable Coping Strategies

Coping strategy	Adaptive level of coping strategy	Frequency of selection, (n=105)	Frequency of selection, %
Cognitive coping strategies			
Preservation of self-control	Adaptive	32	30.5
Problem analysis	Adaptive	29	27.6
Making sense	Conventionally adaptive	19	18.1
Emotional coping strategies			
Optimism	Adaptive	83	79
Suppression of emotions	Non-adaptive	8	7.6
Passive cooperation	Conventionally adaptive	6	5.7
Behavioral coping strategies			
Collaboration	Adaptive	31	29.6
Retreat	Non-adaptive	14	13.3
Addressing	Adaptive	14	13.3

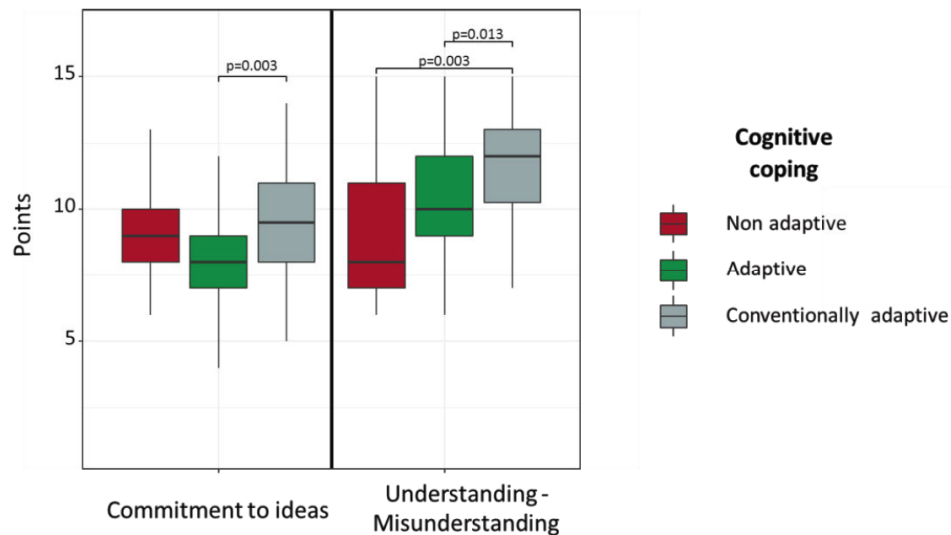


Figure 1: The diagram of interrelation between cognitive coping strategies and "Commitment to ideas" and the initial 5PFQ "Understanding-Misunderstanding" factor parameters.

adaptive coping behaviour, we used other methods of statistical data analysis, on the basis of which we also planned to elicit social and psychological peculiarities of persons who prefer to use non-adaptive forms of coping behaviour.

Using the method of logistic regression, we studied the contribution of each type of coping strategy into subgrouping of the concerned social and psychological parameters. To specify the variety of values in the identified groups of parameters, revealed in significant interrelations, we used the method of pairwise comparisons. The obtained data may be displayed in the Box-Plot diagram with descriptive statistics.

Based on the given diagram (Figure 1), we can assert that at $p=0.003$, there are significant differences in the use of types of cognitive coping strategies for "Commitment to ideas" negotiating style. In particular, we can presume that managers who use adaptive cognitive coping strategies are less inclined to devote their working time to discussions of new ideas that have not passed the "reality check". At the same time managers who use non-adaptive and conventionally adaptive (neutral) cognitive coping strategies may be more charismatic, self-centred and committed to their own ideas and "castles in the sky" in their professional activity.

Also, according to the diagram in Figure 1, there are significant differences at $p=0.003$ in use of types of cognitive coping strategies for initial 5PFQ "Understanding-Misunderstanding" factor. Consequently, we may presume that non-adaptive

cognitive coping strategies are used by those managers who have less expressed ability for understanding and, as a result, perception of the alternative point of view. Adaptive cognitive coping strategies are more common for persons who are ready to understand and perceive the opinion of other people. The highest degree of correlation is between understanding of other people opinion and use of neutral cognitive coping strategies. This may be explained by the readiness to change own point of view towards the socially significant situation and use coping behaviour relevant to peculiarities of the situation. Besides, we found substantial differences in the use of types of emotional coping strategies and initial 5PFQ factors (Figure 2).

Based on the diagram in Figure 2 we may assert that at $p=0.059$, there is a tendency in the use of types of emotional coping strategies for "Responsibility-Irresponsibility" parameter. We may presume that adaptive emotional coping strategies are common for those managers who demonstrate responsibility in the execution of their work duties and timely fulfil the imposed obligations. The less expression of the trait mentioned above of character may be related to the use of non-adaptive and conventionally adaptive emotional coping strategies.

On the basis of given data of statistical analysis (Figure 2) we can make a highly probable presumption that the managers who use adaptive emotional ways of coping in socially significant and stressful situations are less anxious ($p=0.014$), more emotionally relaxed ($p=0.029$) and have higher degree of psychological

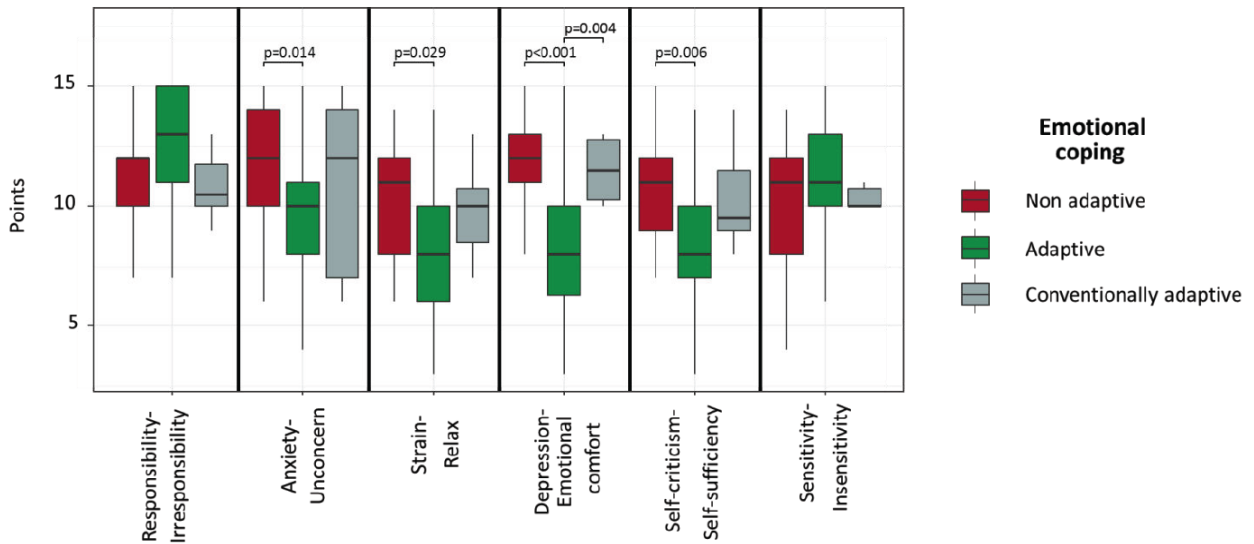


Figure 2: The diagram of interrelations between types of emotional coping strategies and "Commitment to ideas" and initial 5PFQ "Responsibility-Irresponsibility", "Anxiety-Unconcern", "Strain-Relax", "Depression-Emotional comfort", "Self-criticism-Self-sufficiency" and "Sensitivity-Insensitivity" factor parameters.

comfort sense ($p < 0.001$). In addition, such managers are more confident in their abilities ($p = 0.006$) and, at the level of tendencies at $p = 0.070$, possess higher emotional sensitivity in communication with other people and perception of the surrounding world. On the contrary, use of non-adaptive and conventionally adaptive emotional coping strategies can be more common for those persons who have a higher level of anxiety, emotional strain, self-criticism and self-accusation as well as inclination to paint the reality in black.

At the level of tendencies, we can also mention such qualities as reduced emotional sensitivity and

disregard of obligations. In this case, it is not possible to evidently explain what the reason is and what is the consequence, but on the basis of these characteristics, we can define with high probability which of the emotional coping strategies will be used. When studying the interrelation between behavioural coping strategies and social and psychological characteristics, we obtained the data given in Figure 3.

On the basis of given data of statistical analysis, we can make a highly probable presumption that the managers who use adaptive behavioural ways of coping in socially significant and stressful situations demonstrate higher degree of respect to surrounding

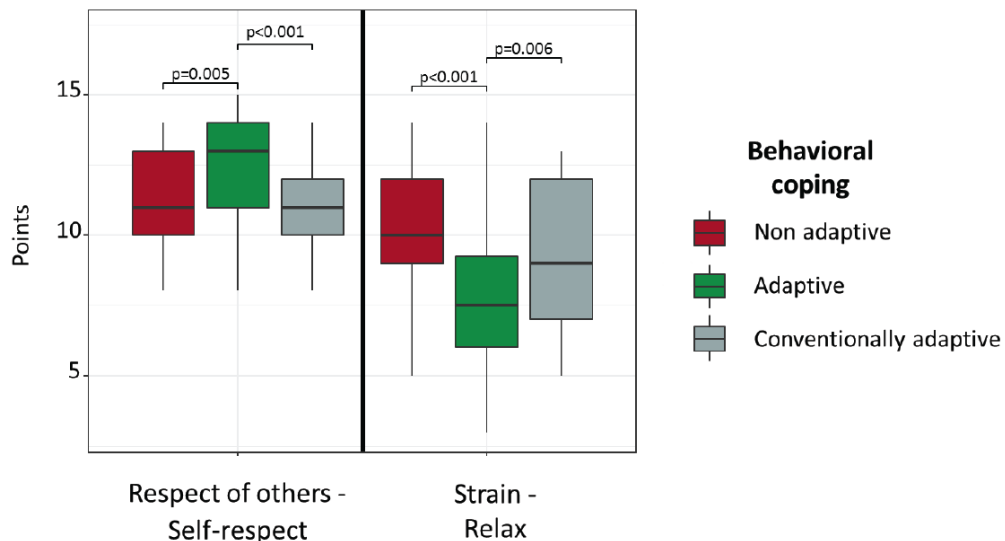


Figure 3: The diagram of interrelations between types of emotional coping strategies and initial 5PFQ "Respect to Others-Self-respect" and "Strain-Relax" factors.

people ($p < 0.001$), which is a standard of business etiquette, and are more emotionally relaxed ($p < 0.001$). Use of neutral behavioural strategies, which adaptivity level depends on the situation, may be related to the medium level of emotional strain ($p = 0.006$). Non-adaptive behavioural coping strategies are more common for people who can highly value and defend the unique correctness of their own point of view ($p = 0.005$) and for those who experience high emotional strain in socially significant and stressful situations.

DISCUSSION

The effective leadership, successful communication with business partners and colleagues, readiness to overcome any critical situations in conditions of the ambiguous environment are highly demanded in modern life for a person holding a managerial position at any type of enterprise: from private ownership to large industrial holding. In the course of our study, we checked several hypotheses, according to which a degree of a manager's emotional stability, development of communication skills, as well as work experience and response to ambiguity may serve as determinants of adaptive behaviour that helps to overcome difficulties. As a result of the study, we obtained the coping profile of managers who use adaptive ways of coping in socially significant situations of negotiations that correlates with perception of modern managers' personality efficiency factors by A.L. Zhuravlev [24]. We may determine the following features of a manager who successfully overcomes the emerging difficulties:

1. Readiness to understand and perceive opinion of other people;
2. Responsibility in execution of work duties and timely fulfillment of the imposed obligations;
3. Reduced anxiety;
4. Emotional stability and tranquillity;
5. Demonstration of respect to surrounding people;
6. Emotional sensitivity in communication with other people and perception of the surrounding world;
7. Realistic attitude and analysis of new ideas and innovations.

It is worth to mention that coping strategies as a resource for managing socially significant situations were mainly used in stressful situations when the time

for performing the challenge was strictly limited, and in situations of frustration when participants failed to come to mutual agreement. According to that the authors in early works studied the business game as an instrument of the study negotiations [29], the specific type of communications in such situations: short and long communications. In these short verbal communications, it was possible to "read" demonstrations of suspiciousness and isolation, possibly related to positive and negative argumentation [30]. "Long" verbal communications were mainly used when participants had the possibility to share their opinion, speak out arguments in favour of their strategy. It is important to mention that openness for contact, intention to find mutual interests and positions is considered as a key to successful business contact [31].

Short and long verbal communications may be regarded as special communicative contact codes, which is one situation may demonstrate coping strategies, with a variety of different forms: confrontation, stress, friction and non-acceptance, and in the other mean willingness, eagerness, intention for cooperation and constructive dialogue. It is worth mention that they are most vividly demonstrated in the situation of negotiations.

These social and psychological characteristics may be considered as the determinants of a person's use of adaptive coping ways under challenging situations and more or less serve as a guarantee for their successful overcoming. Besides, the obtained results are consistent with modern studies of cognitive coping strategies as factors of successful coping with stress [32, 33]. Since work experience is correlated with age, it can be assumed that in further studies, the relationship of effective coping with age is also not confirmed. Similar data have been obtained by University of Munster researchers [34]. However, at the moment, studies are showing that problem-focused coping mediated the relationship between age and positive affect [35]. Thus, the relationship between age differences and types of adaptive coping strategies can be considered open for new research.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the coping profile of managers who use adaptive ways of coping may be explained by the influence of the corporate culture of those industrial enterprises based on which we performed our study. To prove or disapprove this hypothesis, we plan to

perform a similar study of managers working in the enterprises of other business profile. Further, we plan to enlarge the selection by adding the top management respondents who are professional negotiators as well as to compare the respondents of different nationalities and study foreign literature regarding business negotiations and social and psychological resources for the solution of professionally difficult and socially significant situations in business communication. We need to mention that the revealed managers' features are often included by the headhunters or specialists of assessment centres into descriptions of candidates for managerial positions, for example: "operational thinking", "effective communications", "emotional stability", and "loyalty".

All of this proves the necessity for more detailed study of negotiating process considering coping profiles and personal peculiarities of people who may further help us to perform the correct selection of successful in negotiations specialists who are able, in socially significant situations of both collective and individual interest's defence, to carry on constructive dialogue and achieve mutually profitable results. The studies in the field of social psychology and management psychology enable to extend horizons of scientific researches related to the analysis of behavioural and mental peculiarities of persons in socially significant situations. A search for key competencies of successful managers is used in the development of practical guidelines in the field of selection, assessment and development of the personnel holding managerial positions.

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