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## Style of coping with stress and hope for success among the youth attending the Athletic Sports Championships

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## TITLE AND ABSTRACT

**Title** Style of coping with stress and hope for success among the youth attending the Athletic Sports Championships

**Abstract** Introduction and purpose of the work: In Lazarus and Folkman's transactional theory of stress and coping, stress is treated as a relationship between an individual and environment, which is perceived by a person as excessively demanding. It may lead to a loss of sense of well-being if it exceeds the resources available to the individual. One important personal resource for athletes is the hope for success. The aim of the study was to verify the relations between the style of coping with stress and hope for success among students of sports championship schools. Materials and method: The participants of the study were 51 students who do sports aged 16 to 20 years, including 30 women (59%). The mean age was 17.8 years and the standard deviation was 1.16. In this study, the Coping Inventory for Stresfull Situations (CISS) by Endler and Parker in the polish adaptation of Szczepaniak, Strelau and Wrześniewski and the Adult Hope Scale by Snyder in the polish adaptation of Łaguna, Trzebiński and Zięba were used. Results: The research revealed a significant positive correlation between task-oriented coping and the level of hope for success. Gender considerations revealed significant positive correlations between all styles of coping with stress and the level of hope for success in a group of girls, and this also correlated with task-oriented coping style in a group of boys. Conclusions: The obtained results do not allow to form any final conclusions, but they are an important contribution to improving the knowledge of the relations between styles of coping with stress and hope for success, especially among young athletes. An evaluation of the styles of coping with stress may be of great importance for researches and practitioners working with players.

**Key words:** coping with stress; hope for success; young athletes; the Athletic Sports Championships

## **Introduction**

Doing sport is one of the forms of activity often undertaken during the adolescence

period [1]. Sport can then play an important role in supporting the of young people, strengthening their self-esteem and sense of belonging to a group, as well as shaping their ability to cope with stress and self-management in time [2]. The hope for success also seems to play an important role in coping with the requirements of dual career as student and athlete [3].

### Coping with stress

In Lazarus and Folkman's [4] transactional theory of stress and coping, stress is defined as a relationship between an individual and environment, which is perceived by a person as excessively demanding. The style of coping with stress can be described as a relatively constant disposition to take action to reduce the sense of stress, which is preferred in different situations [5].

Endler and Parker [6] mentioned three styles of coping with stress: task-oriented coping (TOC), emotion-oriented coping (EOC) and avoidance-oriented coping (AOC). There are two subscales for the avoidance-oriented scale: distraction and social diversion. The task-oriented coping style is characterized by taking action to solve a problem by cognitively restructuring or attempts to change the situation. The emotion-oriented style describes self-concentrated emotional reactions which are often associated with fantasizing and wishful thinking. Although this strategy is focused on stress reduction, in a long term it may increase stress and lead to negative results. Individuals who use AOC strategies, tend to refrain from the stressful situations. They escape from the source of stress and engage in substitute activities e.g. watching TV, shopping or social contacts.

### Hope for success

According to the Charles Snyder's theory [7], hope is a conviction of having sufficient competences to achieve a success. It is a perceived ability to create pathways in order to achieve desired goals and to motivate oneself to use them. In this perspective, hope for success is based on two aspects: agency (willpower) and pathway (ability to find solutions). The first one refers to the conviction that the plan is feasible and the objective is achievable. The second aspect refers to a perception of oneself as a person who is capable of creating effective solutions that can help in achieving the goal. It is a conviction of sufficient knowledge and intellectual capacity [8].

### Stress and hope for success among the youth attending the Athletic Sports Championships

Hope for success constitute an important individual resource for players who regularly play sports [9,10]. Wilson and Pritchard's [11] research shows that athletes who combine training with education can experience higher levels of stress. Students from sports schools face challenges related to sports competition, e. g. stress before competitions. Hope for a success may play an important role in achieving optimal results [3]. Other research results [12] indicate that athletes are more likely to use TOC and AOC and less likely to use EOC in comparison to individuals not engaged in sports.

### **Aim of the research, research hypotheses:**

The objective of the study was to check the relations (including differences) between the style of coping in stressful situations and the anticipation of success among the students of Athletic Championship Schools (*AChS*) who are exposed to different types of stress related to training, competition and daily activities as students. Based on theoretical considerations and the previously presented research results, it was assumed that the style of dealing with stress focused on the task and the one dedicated to avoidance would positively correlate with the level of hope for success, whereas the style focused on emotions will negatively correlate with the hope of success among the students of the Athletic Championship School. It was also assumed that the gender of a teenager is a relevant factor in the style of coping with stress. Further, it was also anticipated that there are differences in the frequency of using different methods of dealing with stress due to whether the student follows an individual or team discipline.

Three research hypotheses (H) have been formulated:

H.1. There is a relationship between the style of coping with stress and the level of hope for success among the students of Athletic Championship Schools.

H.1a. There is a positive correlation between task-oriented coping and the level of hope for success among students of *AChS*.

H.1b. There is a positive correlation between avoidance-oriented coping and the level of hope for success among students of *AChS*.

H.1c. There is a negative correlation between emotion-oriented coping and the level of hope for success among students of *AChS*.

H.2. There are significant differences in the frequency of using different styles of coping with stress among women and men attending to *ACHS*.

H.3. There are significant differences in the frequency of applying different styles of coping with stress in players of individual and team disciplines who attend *AChS*.

## **Method:**

### **Subjects**

The study was attended by 51 students aged from 16 to 20 years of age, including 30 girls (59%) and 21 boys (41%). The average age was 17.8 years, and the standard error was 1.16. They represented both individual sports ( $n = 25$ ), such as swimming or taekwondo and team sports ( $n = 26$ ), the most frequent of which included basketball and volleyball. Among the students surveyed, 47 dwelled in the city, and only four people declared that their place of residence was the village.

Paper-and-pencil tests were carried out in groups of students of the Athletic Championship School during one meeting, which lasted about 45 minutes. The participants of the study were informed about its purpose and ensured that it was anonymous. It was also indicated that each participant might resign from taking part in the study at any time.

### **Tools employed**

Styles of Coping with Stress Situations. The Stress Survey Questionnaire (CISS) by Endler and Parker was engaged, adapted to Polish conditions by Szczepaniak, Strelau and Wrześniewski [5]. The questionnaire consists of 48 statements regarding various behaviours that people can reveal in stressful situations. The subject determines on a 5-point scale the frequency with which they undertake a given action when faced with difficult and stressful situations. The results are presented on three scales: task-oriented coping; (TOC), emotion-oriented coping (EOC); and, an avoidance-oriented coping (AOC) that in turn can be divided into two subscales: distraction and social diversion.

Hope for success. The Questionnaire of Hope for Success (*KNS*) by Mariola Łaguna, Jerzy Trzebiński, and Mariusz Zięba [13] was used to measure this variable. It is the Polish adaptation of Adult Hope Scale developed by C. R. Snyder and his colleagues. The questionnaire consists of 12 statements (8 diagnostic theorems and four buffer theorems) with an eight-point response scale, where one means “definitely untrue” and 8 “definitely true.”

The KNS includes two components: the ability to find solutions (*ZR*, four questions) and willpower (*SW*, four questions), the sum of which provides additional general result.

## Results

The tool used for statistical analysis was the program *Statistica 13*. Due to the consistency of the distribution of the tested variables with the normal distribution (the evaluation was based on the Shapiro-Wilk test result), all calculations were performed using the parametric tests and analyses. Table 1 presents the average results of the frequency of using individual styles of coping with stress and the level of hope for success in the group of young people attending *AChS*.

Table 1. Basic descriptive statistics of variables analyzed in the study for all subjects (N = 51)

Variable	M	SD
Task-oriented coping style	55.96	9.07
Emotion-oriented coping style	46.76	11.30
Avoidance-oriented coping style	51.33	8.72
Distraction	23.76	5.28
Social diversion	18.41	4.13
Willpower	23.35	4.11
Finding solutions	25.02	3.66
Hope for success – the general result	48.37	7.29

The results showed that young athletes attending the Athletic Championship School, most frequently present a task-oriented coping style (M = 55.96; SD = 9.07), while the least standard style is one oriented on emotions (M = 46.76, SD = 11.3).

To verify whether there is a relationship between the style of coping with stress and the level of hope for success, Pearson's correlation coefficient  $r$  (verification of hypothesis: H1) was used (see Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of Pearson's r linear correlation coefficients for relationships: hope for success and the style of coping with stress.

Variable	Willpower	Finding solutions	Hope for success – the general result
Task-oriented coping style	0.57*	0.60*	0.62*
Emotion-oriented coping style	0.38*	0.36*	0.40*
Avoidance-oriented coping style	0.34*	0.25	0.32*
Social diversion	0.44*	0.44*	0.47*

\*p<0.5

Positive correlations were found between the style of coping with task-based stress ( $r = 0.62$ ), the avoidance-oriented coping style ( $r = 0.40$ ), and the overall result of hope for success. It also turned out that correlations with the overall result on success also occur within the style subscale of avoidance: distraction ( $r = 0.32$ ) and social diversion ( $r = 0.47$ ). The magnitude of the correlation coefficient effect proposed by Jacob Cohen [14] indicates a small (.10), medium (.30) and large effect size (.050). The correlation coefficients in this sample are in the range of 0.32 to 0.62, i.e. the magnitude of the effect was medium and large in this case.

To verify Hypothesis 2, the Student's T-test was used. There was a significant difference in the average results obtained among men and women in the style of coping with stress based on avoidance – the female average is significantly higher than the one obtained among men. There were no significant differences in other styles.

Table 3. Measurement of the significance of differences in the preferences towards the style of coping with stress among women and men, N = 51 (t-Student's test for significance of differences; df = 49)

Variable	MW	MM	T	df	P	SD W	SD M
Task-oriented coping style	56.67	54.95	0.66	49.00	0.51	8.46	10.00
Emotion-oriented coping style	47.13	46.24	0.28	49.00	0.78	10.94	12.05
Avoidance-oriented coping style	53.33	48.48	2.02	49.00	0.05	8.86	7.86
Distraction	24.93	22.10	1.94	49.00	0.06	5.48	4.59
Social diversion	19.20	17.29	1.66	49.00	0.10	4.41	3.49

The magnitude of the different effect was verified using Cohen's  $d$  coefficient. The

coefficient of the effect, proposed by J. Cohen [14], was employed: small (.20); medium (.50); and large (.80). Cohen's *d* factor for the avoidance-oriented coping style variable was: 0.67, thus indicating the average size of the effect.

The last hypothesis, regarding the differences between the analysed variables taking into account the division into disciplines (H.3.), was verified using the Student's t-test analysis. It turned out that there are no differences regarding the frequency of applying different styles of coping with stress among the contestants of individual and team sports who attend ACHSs.

### **Discussion:**

C.R. Snyder [8] emphasises the role of hope in situations in which an individual encounters problems with reaching their goal, and then it is this factor that allows persevering in the decisions made and is the motivator for further action. For this reason, it is a valuable personal resource, especially among athletes [9], which is worth developing. Studies by Minda, Piasecka and Kotyśko [3] indicate that the level of hope for success is related to the perception of parental attitudes, which may suggest one of the critical factors that ought to be taken into consideration while working with young athletes is family contact. Parents play an essential role in the development of their child's sports career [15]. Therefore, the mode that the adolescents perceive their parents' attitudes may turn out to help define the factors facilitating achieving successes or maintaining the desire to continue their education among the students of athletic championship schools.

Hope for success may be associated with the effectiveness of acting in challenging situations [16]. A high level of hope for success affects the ability to make decisions in conditions of uncertainty [17, p. 181]. A person with a high level of hope for success, and what is even greater significance, a strong belief in the ability to find a solution, will generally have lower levels of stress. The results of other studies confirm that a high level of hope for success is regarded as typical among individuals with task-oriented style of coping with stress, while the avoidance-oriented style is associated with people with low hope of success [15, 18]. The results of this study have confirmed the connection between the occurrence of the higher level of hope for success and employing task-oriented style among students of *AChS*. Bojkowski's research [19], in turn, revealed that there are no differences between competitors of individual and team sports regarding the preference of styles of coping with stress (the study conducted only on men though), an outcome confirmed by this study.

The life of an athlete may be riddled with situations deemed as demanding, threatening, or

harmful, including fear for one's health or return to sport after an injury, participation in chief competitions, media interest, poor refereeing, bad weather conditions, or trying opponents [20]. The source of stress for a competitor is not solely the time to prepare for participation in competitions, but also the situations not directly related to sport [21]. Based on the research, it can be stated that equipping the competitors and instructors with the skills facilitating coping with stress, recognising the sources and the signals of stress given by one's body. As stress directly affects an individual's mental well-being [22], it seems essential to optimise its level experienced by an athlete [23]. The research accounts indicate that the lower level of experienced stress is associated with a higher level of life satisfaction demonstrated within a group of academic athletes [24].

### **Conclusions**

1. The participants most frequently use task-oriented coping, and least frequency use emotion-oriented coping style.
2. There is a correlation between the style of coping with stress and the level of hope for success among students attending the Sports Championship Schools. A higher level of hope is associated with the use of the task-oriented coping style or avoidance-oriented coping style.
3. Female athletes are more likely to use an avoidance-oriented coping style than male athletes.
4. There are no differences in style of coping with stress between individual and team athletes.

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