

SECTION «PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES»

PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF STRESS RESILIENCE IN FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AS A KEY RESOURCE FOR THEIR ADAPTATION TO THE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract. In the context of global trends in higher education development and the extreme intensity of the educational process, which is amplified by the complex socio-economic challenges of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the author of the article focused on the critical importance of the adaptation problem for first-year students to the university environment. The author noted that the first year of study is a crucial stage accompanied by a significant change in social status, lifestyle rhythm, and increased responsibility. In this situation, stress resilience is highlighted as a key psychological resource that ensures effective integration into academic life and subsequent personal development. The author investigated theoretical approaches to the interpretation of the phenomena of stress and stress resilience in psychological science, tracing the evolution of the concept from the philosophical ideas of Antiquity (Plato, Aristotle, Stoics) regarding harmony and control over emotions, to classical scientific concepts. The "fight-or-flight" theory by W. Cannon was examined, and H. Selye's three-stage model of stress (alarm, resistance, exhaustion) was analyzed in detail, including the distinction between the concepts of distress and eustress. The author paid special attention to the transactional theory of stress by R. Lazarus and S. Folkman, which views stress as a result of the interaction between the individual and the environment, where cognitive appraisal of the situation plays a crucial role. Based on the analysis, the

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author formulated a comprehensive definition of stress resilience as an integrated and dynamic personality trait that combines cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological mechanisms for effective adaptation to stress factors. In the subsequent section, the author theoretically identified the psychological conditions for the formation of stress resilience in first-year students. She substantiated that self-confidence (belief in one's own abilities, linked to A. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy), self-esteem (a deep positive attitude toward oneself, independent of external evaluations), and a low level of anxiety (as a predisposition to perceive situations as threatening, according to C. Spielberger) are critically important internal determinants. The author emphasized their complex dynamic interaction and influence on the choice of constructive coping strategies, which is crucial for successful academic and social adaptation. The article also examined the specificity of stress resilience in adolescence (ages 15-23), a period characterized by the active formation of ego-identity (according to E. Erikson), self-determination, and worldview development. The author underscored that this age is particularly vulnerable to stress, as young people face academic stress (intensive workload, new requirements) and socio-adaptive challenges (changing environment, establishing connections). The ability to resist these factors, maintain high working capacity, and goal orientation was recognized as a key function of stress resilience during this age period. The research objective was achieved, and the theoretical results obtained, in the author's conclusion, can serve as a reliable basis for the development of targeted psychological support programs and training aimed at increasing the adaptive potential of first-year students.

1. Introduction

In the context of contemporary trends in higher education development and the increasing intensity of the learning process, the problem of youth adaptation to the university environment is becoming particularly acute. The first year of study at a higher education institution (HEI) is a pivotal stage in a young person's life, associated with significant transformations in social status, a change in the usual rhythm of life, increased responsibility, and the need to master new forms of educational activity.

It is at this stage that students encounter numerous stressors, ranging from academic demands and the need for independent time management

to establishing interpersonal relationships in a new group and resolving everyday issues, especially for those who leave home. The intensity and duration of the exposure to these stressors can have a significant negative impact on the psycho-emotional state of first-year students, their academic performance, and overall well-being. This situation is further aggravated by the fact that Ukrainian society is currently operating under complex circumstances, namely the Russian-Ukrainian war, migration, economic crisis, inflation, and so on. All these factors require people to adapt to new living conditions.

In this context, stress resistance (stress tolerance) emerges not merely as a desirable personal quality but as a key psychological resource that ensures effective adaptation to new conditions. The individual's ability to withstand the destructive influence of stress, maintain functionality, and psychological balance under increased tension is crucial for successful integration into university life and subsequent personal development.

The psychological features of the development of stress resistance are explored in the works of A. Bandura, H. Dubchak, V. Korolchuk, O. Lutsenko, M. Liashevych, O. Liashch, S. Maksymenko, O. Melnychuk, A. Naumenko, Ya. Ovsianynkova, H. Ryshko, Kh. Stelmashchuk, Ya. Fedorova, and others.

Despite the significant scientific interest in the issues of student adaptation, the psychological features of stress resistance *specifically* in first-year students remain insufficiently studied. Existing research is often fragmented or covers broader age groups of students, neglecting the specifics of the first year of study. At the same time, an empirically substantiated understanding of the psychological features of stress resistance in first-year students has direct practical significance. The results obtained can become a reliable basis for the development and implementation of effective psychological support programs aimed at increasing the students' adaptive potential, and forming their skills in self-regulation and stress management. This knowledge is important for university psychological services, academic group curators, lecturers, and HEI administration in the context of creating a favourable and supportive educational environment.

The goal of the study is to theoretically identify the psychological features of the development of stress resistance in first-year students.

To achieve this goal (to theoretically identify the psychological features of the development of stress resistance in first-year students), the following tasks are set:

1. To review and analyze existing scientific approaches to understanding the concept of stress and stress resistance, and to examine the psychological mechanisms of their development.

2. To identify the specific characteristics of stress resistance manifestation in adolescence.

3. To determine the key psychological conditions (factors) for the formation of stress resistance in first-year students (in particular, the role of self-confidence, self-esteem, and anxiety).

2. Theoretical Approaches to the Interpretation of Stress and Stress Resistance in Psychological Science

Stress and stress resistance (stress tolerance) are among the key concepts of modern psychology, intensively researched due to their significant impact on human functioning. Stress is an integral part of the human experience. However, the ability to effectively adapt to stressful situations plays a crucial role in maintaining mental health, achieving success in activity, and overall quality of life. Understanding these phenomena is particularly relevant in the context of first-year students' adaptation, as they face new demands and challenges.

The roots of the concept of "stress" can be traced back to Antiquity. In the philosophical works of Plato, we find ideas about the influence of emotions and mental states on the physical body. The thinker pointed to the interconnectedness of soul and body, suggesting that disharmony in the soul can lead to illnesses of the body. His concept of mind, spirit, and appetite as parts of the soul that must be in harmony reflects the idea of internal balance, the disruption of which can cause suffering. Aristotle focused on emotions and their influence on a person. He analyzed states such as anger, fear, and sadness, which modern researchers recognize as typical reactions to stress. His works on ethics and psychology explored how excessive or inappropriate emotions can harm an individual's well-being. Stoic philosophers, such as Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, paid great attention to a person's ability to control their reactions to external circumstances. The thinkers emphasized that suffering arises not from

the events themselves, but from our attitude toward them. This closely resembles modern cognitive approaches to stress and stress resistance, where cognitive appraisal of the event is key. Stoics actively practiced mental exercises to develop internal strength and tranquility (ataraxia) to avoid misfortune, which is a form of psychological resilience.

It is particularly important to note the significant influence of the psychoanalytic tradition, which, although not using the term "stress" in the modern sense, developed the concept of defense mechanisms. Z. Freud and his followers argued that the human psyche is constantly under pressure from internal conflicts and external threats, and to maintain equilibrium (homeostasis), it unconsciously activates defense mechanisms (repression, denial, rationalization). These mechanisms are, in essence, the first psychological models of counteracting internal tension, which is an important precursor to understanding coping strategies in modern stress psychology.

However, the term "stress" first appeared in the works of the American physiologist W. Cannon. The scientist viewed the organism as an open system in a state of equilibrium under the control of the endocrine and nervous systems in works such as *Some General Characteristics of Endocrine Influence on Metabolism* (1926) and *The Wisdom of the Body* (1932). W. Cannon described how the organism reacts to stimuli, preparing for "fight or flight." This famous phrase summarizes the two possible reactions to stress: "fight" means actively changing reality, adjusting, or adapting, while "flight" is avoiding the threat.

Nevertheless, the term "stress" began to be actively used in science primarily thanks to the works of H. Selye, and it meant a universal reaction of the organism to any harmful influences, unfolding in three consecutive stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion [45, p. 205-210]. The organism's reaction to stress, described by H. Selye, includes three main stages:

1. Alarm Stage (Alarm Reaction). This is the initial reaction to a stressor, which triggers the "fight or flight" mechanism. At this moment, the organism mobilizes its defensive capabilities: blood pressure rises, breathing and pulse quicken, and attention is completely focused on the source of stress.

2. Resistance Stage. If the stress does not disappear immediately, the organism tries to adapt to it. During this period, cortisol is released, glucose metabolism is stimulated, and the immune system is suppressed,

allowing a certain balance to be achieved. However, at this stage, decreased performance, unwillingness for physical activity, increased appetite, and other non-specific manifestations may be observed.

3. Exhaustion Stage. This stage occurs when the organism can no longer resist stress due to the depletion of its adaptive resources. This usually happens as a result of prolonged or constantly recurring stress. In this phase, diseases often develop as a consequence of maladaptation. The manifestations of such exhaustion can be varied, affecting the emotional, cognitive, and somatic spheres [37].



**Figure 1. Selye's Stress Stage Model
(General Adaptation Syndrome – GAS)**

We emphasize that according to H. Selye's concept, stress is a state of physical or psychological tension. It arises under the influence of various factors – be they physical, mental, emotional, external, or internal, or a combination thereof – that tend to disrupt the normal functioning of the organism, and the organism itself tries to avoid this influence. Depending on the strength, duration, and dose of the stressors, the stress reaction can develop according to one of two scenarios:

1. If the stressor's influence is prolonged or excessive, the reaction goes through all three sequential stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. In this case, the General Adaptation Syndrome becomes a destructive process, called distress.

2. If the organism successfully adapts, the reaction is limited to only the first two stages (alarm and resistance). This leads to the so-called eustress (positive stress), which, according to Selye, contributes to maintaining and preserving health.

Aiming to explain stress as a dynamic process, the American psychologist R. Lazarus (in collaboration with S. Folkman) developed the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping. This theory views stress as the result of an interaction (transaction) between the individual (with their various systems: cognitive, physiological, affective, psychological, neurological) and their complex environment. The scientist emphasized that psychological stress is fundamentally different from physiological stress. He argued that adverse stressors in psychological stress affect the person not directly, but indirectly – through their subjective attitude toward the situation. The central element of this theory is the mechanism of cognitive appraisal, which includes two stages: primary appraisal, where the individual determines whether the situation is irrelevant, positive, or stressful (a threat or a challenge); and secondary appraisal, if the situation is deemed stressful, the person assesses their resources and capabilities for coping with that situation.

That is, while physiological stress affects everyone exposed to it, psychological stress may affect some people, while for others in the same situation, it may not arise. This approach shifted the research focus from the stressor as an objective irritant to subjective perception and the active role of the individual in forming the stress reaction.

According to D. Kravtsov, "Stress (from English 'stress' – 'tension') is a state of tension, i.e., a set of protective physiological reactions that occur in the organism of animals and humans in response to the influence of various adverse factors (stressors), including cold, starvation, mental and physical trauma, radiation, blood loss, and infections" [17, p. 112].

In 1972, the World Health Organization adopted the following definition: stress is a non-specific (i.e., the same response to different stimuli) reaction of the organism to any demand made upon it. Stress is a response to a threat, real or imagined [22].

As we can see, stress is a constant dialogue between the person and the world that accompanies us throughout life, filling it with certain meaning. Any situation becomes stressful only when it does not leave the person

indifferent. If an event affects us, disrupts our balance, and forces us to reflect on its causes and consequences, it becomes a source of new experience.

When considering the phenomenon of stress, the concept of stress resistance (stress tolerance) cannot be overlooked.

In psychological science, stress resistance is defined as the human ability to effectively cope with and resist stress. This protective function of the organism is important for successful adaptation to changing environmental conditions and counteracting the negative influence of both external and internal stress-inducing factors. However, there is currently no single clear definition of "stress resistance" in the scientific community. Therefore, we will try to form our own understanding of this concept based on the analysis and refinement of the essence of the "stress resistance" phenomenon.

Thus, V. Korolchuk, in the work *Psychological Foundations of Personality Stress Resistance Research*, defines it as "a structurally-functional dynamic, integrative personality trait, as a result of the transactional process of the individual encountering a stress-inducing factor, combining cognitive representation, objective characteristic of the situation, and demands on the personality" [15, p. 186]. A similar position is held by another domestic scholar, M. Shpak, who considers stress resistance as "an integral personality property that encompasses a complex of cognitive, emotional, adaptive, and personal characteristics that ensure a person's ability to resist stress, counteract the negative influence of stressful factors for the purpose of preserving mental health" [39, p. 202]. The researcher also notes that stress resistance is the personality's ability to resist stress, to oppose it. A similar argument is found in T. Dudka's work *Psychological Features of Personality Stress Resistance*. The scientist asserts that stress resistance "is an integral property of the holistic personality, and is interconnected with a multi-level system of elements represented by a complex of cognitive, intellectual, emotional, and personal characteristics. Individual differences in the degree of stress resistance expression are determined by the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the personality properties that make up this complex" [8].

It is also important to mention the concept of Psychological Hardiness, developed by S. Kobasa. Hardiness is viewed as a system of beliefs that helps the personality perceive stressful situations as less threatening. This concept consists of three interconnected components: commitment, control,

and challenge. An individual with high hardiness, when faced with stress, tends to believe they can influence the outcome (control), participate in life events (commitment), and view changes as opportunities for growth rather than catastrophes (challenge). Hardiness is one of the most empirically validated constructs explaining individual differences in stress resistance.

Similar views on the definition of stress resistance are found in the research of other scholars, for example, N. Lebid, R. Shevchenko, etc. As we can see, all of them are based on the understanding that stress resistance is an integral personality property that combines: cognitive qualities, emotional qualities, adaptive mechanisms, and personal traits. It is this interaction and integration of various components that enables a person to effectively counteract stressful factors, resist them, preserve mental and physical health, and maintain productivity even under significant intellectual, volitional, or emotional pressure.

The next approach to definition focuses on stress resistance as a key ability of the individual to adapt to stressful conditions and maintain functionality. According to D. Dubravska, "stress resistance is the individual ability of the organism to maintain normal performance during the action of a stressor" [7, p. 162]. According to M. Myhal and O. F. Protarenko, stress resistance is the human ability to counteract the negative influence of stress factors. This ability is determined by a unique complex of innate and acquired psychological and physiological properties and processes of the personality [20, pp. 248–252].

The dissertation research of D. Morozov, *Motivational Factors of Stress Resistance in Graduates of Higher Education Institutions*, is interesting. The researcher interprets stress resistance as a complex personality trait that allows graduates to successfully adapt to professional and life challenges after completing their studies [21]. D. Morozov views stress resistance not just as the ability to resist stress, but as an active process in which motivational factors play a key role. This means that the level of stress resistance in graduates may depend on their goals, values, internal motives for overcoming difficulties, professional self-development, and achieving success.

L. Kuznietsova, examining the influence of stress on students, interprets stress resistance as a person's ability to withstand significant psychophysical loads and stress-inducing environmental influences without significant harm

to the organism and psyche. She also notes that a stress-resistant personality easily adapts to the social environment, clearly realizes their social status in the group, and identifies with it [18, pp. 98-102].

Thus, this approach generalizes stress resistance as a fundamental ability of the personality to maintain its efficiency and function effectively under stress. It emphasizes that this ability depends on a unique combination of both innate and acquired psychophysiological properties that allow the individual to successfully counteract the negative influence of stressful factors.

We highlight the approach clearly represented by the works of R. Lazarus and S. Folkman. The scholars view stress resistance not as a static trait, but as a dynamic process realized through the person's active efforts to overcome stress. The key here is the concept of coping. Stress resistance, from this perspective, is the effectiveness of the cognitive and behavioral strategies that the individual employs to reduce the negative impact of stress or maintain psychosocial adaptation in a stressful situation. This means that a stress-resistant personality is one who possesses a diverse arsenal of coping strategies and knows how to apply them effectively depending on the specific situation. Two main categories of coping strategies are usually distinguished: problem-focused coping (aimed at changing or eliminating the source of stress) and emotion-focused coping (aimed at reducing negative emotional reactions to stress). Effective stress resistance involves flexible switching between these two types depending on the controllability of the situation.

Thus, the approach of R. Lazarus and S. Folkman became foundational for understanding stress resistance as an **** active interaction**** of a person with challenges, where the key role belongs to cognitive appraisal and the application of effective coping strategies that allow for the maintenance of adaptation and psychological well-being.

Therefore, based on the conducted theoretical analysis of different approaches to the interpretation of the phenomenon of stress resistance in psychological science, a proprietary, comprehensive definition can be formulated: Stress resistance is an integrated and dynamic personality property that is manifested in the ability to effectively adapt to various stressful factors (external and internal), while preserving mental and physical health, optimal performance, and social functionality. This property

combines a complex of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological mechanisms that allow a person to perform:

- Adequate cognitive appraisal of the stressful situation and its potential threats.

- Effective mobilization of one's own resources (psychological, physical, social) to counteract stress.

- Active application of various coping strategies to reduce the negative impact of the stressor.

- Successful overcoming of challenges, transforming them into new experience, opportunities for personal growth, and preservation of internal harmony.

Thus, stress resistance is not just passive resistance, but an active, adaptive interaction of a person with the world, which allows for the maintenance of psychological well-being and functionality in changing life conditions.

3. Psychological Conditions for the Formation of Stress Resistance

The formation of stress resistance is a complex, multifactorial process, largely determined by both external social and educational conditions and deep internal psychological characteristics of the personality. In the context of first-year students' adaptation to a new academic and social environment, understanding these internal conditions is of particular importance. Among the key psychological determinants that define an individual's ability to effectively overcome stressful situations arising during the learning process and personal development, the following stand out: self-confidence, self-esteem, and the level of anxiety. These factors not only influence the subjective perception of potentially stressful events but also directly shape behavioral responses and the choice of coping strategies, which determine the success of adaptation.

Self-confidence is a fundamental psychological construct that reflects a person's belief in their own strength, abilities, and capacity to function effectively, cope with life challenges, and achieve set goals. It is not merely the absence of doubt, but an active internal position that allows the individual to mobilize their resources in conditions of uncertainty and pressure. O. Vodolazska's opinion is sound: "Self-confidence is an important factor that allows a person to achieve their goals, even in difficult

circumstances. It provides the necessary internal motivation and strength to overcome obstacles on the path to self-realization" [3].

The key theoretical basis for understanding confidence is A. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy [41]. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their own ability to organize and execute the actions required to achieve desired outcomes. Bandura identified four main sources of self-efficacy formation:

1. Mastery Experiences: Successful overcoming of difficulties is the most powerful source.

2. Vicarious Experiences: Observation of the success of others who are similar to oneself.

3. Social Persuasion: Encouragement and support from significant others.

4. Physiological and Emotional States: Interpretation of one's own emotional and bodily reactions to stress [41].

The influence of self-confidence on stress resistance manifests on several interconnected levels. Individuals with a high level of self-confidence tend to perceive potentially stressful situations not as insurmountable threats, but as challenges or opportunities for personal growth and development. Such cognitive re-appraisal plays a key role in the stress and coping model of R. Lazarus and S. Folkman [43]. If a person is confident that they have sufficient resources to overcome an obstacle, the intensity of their emotional reaction to stress significantly decreases. For example, for a first-year student confident in their academic abilities, a challenging exam session will be a stimulus for more intensive preparation, not a source of paralyzing fear. In contrast, insecurity can lead to the catastrophization of the situation, overestimation of its threatening nature, and underestimation of one's own resources, which exacerbates feelings of helplessness and stress.

Confidence is also a powerful driving force for the application of active, problem-focused coping strategies. Instead of avoiding the problem, resorting to passivity, or destructive forms of reaction, a self-confident person actively seeks ways to solve it: gathering information, developing a detailed action plan, seeking social support, and analyzing the possible consequences of their decisions. A. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy [41] is directly linked to self-confidence: high self-efficacy leads to choosing more challenging tasks, greater persistence, and better results. A. Bandura

emphasizes that "confidence in one's efficacy does not always guarantee success, but disbelief undoubtedly breeds giving up" [41, p. 77].

Moreover, a self-confident person perceives failures not as confirmation of their own incompetence, but as valuable learning experiences and correction for future actions. This ensures the rapid recovery of the psychological state after stressful situations and prevents the development of chronic stress or burnout. Research on psychological hardiness, presented by S. Kobasa [44], also emphasizes the role of belief in one's own control over events and commitment as key components that allow the personality to perceive stress as an opportunity, not a threat. Self-confidence is also associated with constructive internal dialogue, where the person supports themselves, reminds themselves of their strengths and previous successes, which helps maintain psychological balance even during periods of intense pressure.

Closely related to self-confidence is self-esteem – a deep, stable, and positive attitude toward oneself, based on the realization of one's own dignity and worth as an individual, regardless of external circumstances, achievements, or the evaluations of others. Self-esteem is not just high self-assessment, but an emotionally charged, fundamental acceptance of oneself with all advantages and disadvantages.

In the context of stress resistance, self-esteem acts as a "buffer" or "protective shell" for the personality. Carl Rogers [47] considered unconditional positive self-regard (which is the essence of self-esteem) as the foundation for psychological health. He argued that when an individual has high self-esteem, their "Self-concept" is less vulnerable to external criticism and failures.

T. Tkachuk, considering the central role of self-esteem as the core of the personality and its key function in self-regulation, emphasizes that an adequately high level of self-esteem is crucial for organizing purposeful human behavior, activity, and interaction with others. After all, the level of self-criticism and demands on oneself, as well as the nature of perception of one's own successes and failures, depend on self-esteem [32]. Investigating the features of stress resistance development in future law enforcement officers, K. Kim reveals that people with low self-esteem face significant difficulties in overcoming stress, which is due to two main aspects of their negative self-perception. Firstly, such individuals experience more intense

fear or anxiety under the influence of threatening situations compared to those with positive self-esteem. Secondly, they demonstrate less activity in applying preventive measures, are prone to fatalistic beliefs, and believe they cannot influence the prevention of negative consequences. This leads to them often trying to avoid difficulties because they are convinced of their own inability to cope with them [14]. As we can see, self-esteem is a key foundation that determines a person's behavior, their ability to cope with various life situations, how they experience failures and whether they draw conclusions from them, and what result they direct their efforts toward.

Self-esteem is also a powerful internal driving force for self-development and the pursuit of excellence. A person who values themselves realizes their potential and strives to realize it, which is especially important during the period of adaptation to university studies. Furthermore, self-esteem influences the ability to build healthy, authentic, and supportive relationships.

One of the most powerful destructive factors for the formation and maintenance of stress resistance is a high level of anxiety. The famous American psychologist C. Spielberger defined trait anxiety as "the predisposition to perceive a wide range of objectively non-threatening situations as dangerous and to respond to them with a state of anxiety, which causes increased physiological and psychological discomfort" [46]. People with high anxiety have a heightened system for perceiving threats, tending to interpret neutral or ambivalent situations as threatening, which leads to an intense stress response.

As I. Yastochkina notes, "increased trait anxiety leads to insecurity in one's communication abilities, is associated with a negative social status, and forms conflictual relationships. The state of anxiety is characterized by strong psycho-emotional tension and prolongation. Therefore, a high level of anxiety in a person is a risk factor and requires correction" [40].

It should be noted that for first-year students, increased anxiety can significantly complicate adaptation, turning ordinary challenges into insurmountable obstacles. Chronic anxiety depletes the body's adaptive resources, leading to mental and physical exhaustion, which reduces the ability to concentrate, make decisions, and recover. I. Blokhina's opinion is correct that students with an increased level of anxiety are characterized

by low self-esteem and self-respect, they are insecure, feel lonely. Anxiety, which correlates with changing values and dissatisfaction with the need to maintain control over surrounding reality, is experienced by students as emotional discomfort [2]. Researchers O. Kocharian and M. Piven, in the study *Emotional Maturity of Personality: Research on the Phenomenon*, prove the negative influence of trait anxiety on the formation of resistance to stress and emotional experiences. Therefore, for the formation of personality stress resistance, it is necessary first and foremost to reduce anxiety, teach relaxation, and master self-soothing techniques, etc. [16].

Moreover, high anxiety is often accompanied by physical and psychosomatic manifestations, which are themselves a source of additional stress. There is a clear inverse relationship: high anxiety, as a rule, negatively correlates with the level of self-confidence and self-esteem, creating a vicious cycle.

It is important to understand that the psychological conditions considered do not exist in isolation but are in a complex, dynamic interaction. They form an integrated system where changes in one component affect the others. For example, low self-esteem can increase anxiety, and high anxiety, in turn, undermines self-confidence. Conversely, an increase in self-confidence can contribute to a decrease in the level of anxiety, as the person begins to adequately assess threats and their resources to overcome them. This also positively affects self-esteem, as successful problem-solving and goal achievement confirm one's own worth and competence. Such a positive cycle creates a strong foundation for the formation and development of high stress resistance.

For first-year students, who are at the stage of intensive adaptation to new social and academic demands, the development of these psychological conditions is critically important. Low confidence, insufficient self-esteem, and increased anxiety can lead not only to academic failure but also to serious psychological problems, social maladjustment, reduced motivation for learning, and even withdrawal from the HEI. Therefore, understanding these interconnections is the basis for developing targeted and effective programs of psychological support and training aimed at increasing the stress resistance of this vulnerable category of students.

4. Specificity of Stress Resistance in Adolescence

Adolescence (Youth), typically spanning the period from 15-16 to 21-23 years [33 548 p.], is one of the most intense and pivotal stages of personality development. In psychology, youth is regarded as the psychological age of transition to independence, a period of self-determination, the formation of mental, ideological, and civic maturity, the formation of worldview, moral consciousness, and self-awareness [11, pp. 83–85]. This is a time of active self-determination, identity formation, professional and personal development, accompanied by significant changes in all spheres of young people's lives. It is specifically this period of adolescence that covers the university years, which determines the specificity of psychological challenges and the formation of stress resistance in young people. This is especially true for first-year students, for whom the transition to higher education becomes a powerful adaptive challenge, demanding a high level of psychological flexibility and stress resistance.

The specificity of stress resistance in adolescence is determined by both the general laws of personality development and the unique psychosocial tasks of this period. One of the central tasks of adolescence, according to E. Erikson, is the formation of ego identity – a holistic self-image, a sense of one's place in the world, and one's future [42, p. 165].

This process is associated with an active search for oneself, experimentation with different social roles, values, and beliefs, which can be accompanied by periods of uncertainty, internal conflicts, and crises. A young person at this time asks themselves: "Who am I?", "Who do I want to be?", "What is my place in this world?". The individual in this age category experiments with various social roles, values, and worldviews, trying to find what best corresponds to their inner world. The instability of self-esteem and vulnerability to external evaluation can increase susceptibility to stress. At the same time, the successful formation of a positive and adequate self-esteem is a powerful resource for stress resistance.

According to J. Marcia, identity in adolescence is formed through two key processes: crisis – a period of choice and search – and commitment – the level of adoption and implementation of the chosen role or goal. Students experiencing an "identity crisis," i.e., actively searching but not yet committed to key life roles (professional, personal), often demonstrate

a higher level of anxiety and a tendency to use less adaptive (emotion-focused) coping strategies. Conversely, those who have achieved "identity achievement" show greater resistance to stressors, as they have a clearly articulated system of values and goals.

According to O. Zazymko, "this stage of personality formation (adolescence – L.M.) is characterized by the intensive development of self-awareness, an adequate assessment of individual capabilities and social conditions. At this age, in the process of personality development, certain manifestations of self-awareness become central needs of the personality. The acute actualization of the need for self-awareness processes often occurs under the influence of strong emotional experiences, which are abundant in adolescence. Such a need stimulates the desire for self-improvement, and goal-directed changes to one's individuality. Self-awareness no longer merely reflects the features of personality formation but significantly influences the process of its development as a whole" [10, p. 74].

Investigating the psychological causes of anxiety in students, I. Blokhina emphasizes that in student age, the internal position with a focus on achieving a global goal – a life strategy – is actualized, and plans for its achievement are built. The complexity of choice in self-determination is also conditioned by the fact that authoritative adult surroundings often doubt the correctness of their recommendations. This situation forces the young person to independently make their own decisions and take responsibility for them. The lack of experience and certain emotional concerns and fears in this context often lead to the young person's confusion, situational, and sometimes, trait anxiety [2].

These internal changes make young men and women particularly vulnerable to stress, but at the same time, they form the basis for their future psychological resilience. A. Maievska's opinion is sound that in adolescence, stress resistance plays a key role in maintaining high performance and orientation toward achieving set goals. It also significantly increases the effectiveness of functioning in all aspects of the individual's life activity, including cognitive, behavioral, motivational, and affective spheres [19].

The psychological state of a student is significantly influenced by a number of unfavorable factors, including intensive intellectual activity combined with increased static load and limited physical activity. Furthermore, disruptions to the usual life cycle create a burden that causes

pronounced emotional experiences and requires increased mobilization of volitional functions.

In adolescence, educational activity in higher and vocational education institutions differs significantly from adolescent learning in general secondary education institutions. The study load increases, and new, more complex subjects and material appear. Demands on students are significantly higher: they are expected to be organized, responsible, independent, and complete tasks on time. In such conditions, academic and professional activity can turn into an additional source of stress – academic stress.

A specific challenge facing first-year students is the need to master metacognitive skills, i.e., the ability to learn. The school model, based on teacher control, is replaced by the university model, which requires independent planning, prioritizing, and time management. The underdevelopment of these skills often leads to a feeling of loss of control, which, according to S. Kobasa's theory of hardiness, is a direct source of distress.

Effective counteraction to academic stress depends on the level of development of personality stress resistance, which allows one to withstand significant intellectual loads, maintain a balance of basic cognitive and emotional-regulatory functions, reduce the level of tension during task performance, and increase mental performance. The fear of not coping with studies, getting low grades, and competition with peers are powerful stressors. Moreover, a significant source of stress is adaptation to a new social environment, which often includes moving to another city, living in a dormitory, and the need to establish new social ties.

Socialization in adolescence largely reorients from the family to the peer reference group. For first-year students who have just changed their social circle, the need to "fit into" a new group, adopt its norms, and find their place creates a high social load. Unsuccessful social adaptation (feelings of isolation, social anxiety) becomes a strong stressor that can lead to the use of maladaptive coping strategies, such as social avoidance or escape from reality.

Another significant challenge is self-identification and professional self-determination, as adolescence is the time for choosing a future professional path. Uncertainty about the correctness of the choice, doubts about one's own abilities and prospects can cause existential stress. The increase in

independence and responsibility is also a stressful factor, as the transition from adolescent dependence to adult independence involves the need to independently make decisions, plan one's time, manage finances, and bear responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. We agree with M. Dubinka's position that "the personal formation of a young person occurs quite complexly; it is accompanied by a number of contradictions and difficulties that must be taken into account in the educational process. The contradictions are socio-psychological in nature: on the one hand, the development of the student's intellectual and physical forces, and on the other hand, the limited time and economic opportunities for satisfying needs, etc. Unlike schoolchildren, students' interests shift to the plane of their future profession. Independence of actions in student age takes on a practical nature" [6].

Let's focus more on the key psychological characteristics of this age. Firstly, this is the intensive formation of the "Self-concept" and self-esteem. Instability of self-esteem and vulnerability to external evaluation can increase susceptibility to stress. At the same time, the successful formation of a positive and adequate self-esteem is a powerful resource for stress resistance. Secondly, this is the development of the emotional sphere. According to domestic scholars, in early adolescence, the emotional sphere becomes significantly more complex and diverse, while its manageability and controllability increase. During this period, the number of affective reactions decreases, and emotional life, although remaining intense, becomes less turbulent and more stable. Young people, regardless of the type of nervous system, show significantly greater restraint and balance compared to adolescents, and the manifestations of their emotions and feelings become richer and more flexible [9]. Underdeveloped skills of emotional self-regulation can lead to destructive ways of reacting to stress.

Thirdly, this involves features of thinking and cognitive styles. In adolescence, abstract-logical thinking continues to develop, and abilities for reflection, self-analysis, and forecasting are formed. However, in the initial stages of youth, certain cognitive distortions (e.g., catastrophizing, black-and-white thinking, overgeneralization) can lead to inadequate assessment of stressful situations and increased anxiety. The development of cognitive flexibility and the ability for positive re-appraisal of events is important for increasing stress resistance.

Fourthly, adolescence is a period of active formation and consolidation of the individual repertoire of coping strategies – conscious and unconscious actions aimed at overcoming stress and its consequences. A study by the Ukrainian scholar T.V. Sinelnikova involving 80 adolescents revealed interesting trends in the use of coping strategies. Among first-year students of K.D. Ushynsky South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University, avoidance (82%) and seeking social support (78%) dominated. However, by the fifth year, the situation changes: problem-solving (70%) and seeking social support (65%) become the leading strategies, while only 5% of respondents choose the avoidance strategy. Notably, first-year students more often seek support from parents, while senior students turn to close partners [29. pp. 10–105]. Research conducted by O. Voloshok and L. Nozdrina among adolescents at various higher education institutions in Lviv (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukrainian Catholic University, Danylo Halytsky Lviv National Medical University) showed that the dominant coping strategies for student youth were escape-avoidance, self-control, and planned problem-solving [4].

As we can see, without proper psychological support, young people may choose ineffective or maladaptive strategies that only deepen the problems.

The role of social support also remains extremely important. Dependence on parental support decreases, but the significance of support from peers and significant adults (lecturers, mentors) increases. We agree with N. Oleksiuk's opinion that "the presence/absence of social support significantly affects both the process of obtaining education and its result, because a student who feels supported during their studies spends time more effectively on acquiring knowledge, forming new skills, and overcomes difficulties more easily" [24, pp. 40–47]. Kh. Stelmashchuk emphasizes the key role of social support in a person's ability to effectively overcome stress. The researcher asserts that the process of social support is an important factor in overcoming stressful and problematic situations, highlighting three main components:

1. The person's ability to find people who are ready to provide help – seeking social support.
2. The presence of such people and structures capable of providing support (family, friends, significant others, members of public organizations).

3. The person's ability to accept help from others – perception of social support [31]. The absence or deficit of effective social support can significantly increase the level of stress and reduce adaptive capacity.

Despite the increased vulnerability to stress, adolescence is also a sensitive period for the development and strengthening of stress resistance. The plasticity of the psyche, high capacity for learning, and openness to new experiences create favorable conditions for the formation of adaptive mechanisms. This includes the development of self-regulation – the ability to consciously manage one's thoughts, emotions, and behavior, which encompasses time management, planning, and the ability to set realistic goals. Also important is the formation of psychological flexibility and resilience (stability) – the ability to effectively adapt to changes, overcome difficulties, and recover after adverse events. In adolescence, the foundations of this ability are laid, which allows one to transform traumatic experiences into a source of development. S. Kobasa's concept of hardiness [44] emphasizes the importance of the three components: commitment (striving for active participation in life), control (belief in the ability to influence events), and challenge (perceiving changes as opportunities). These qualities are especially relevant for young people entering adulthood. Furthermore, through specialized training and psychological work, young people can be taught to recognize stressors and master effective coping strategies, which includes managing emotions, problem-solving, and using relaxation and resource restoration methods.

The development of emotional intelligence – the ability to understand one's own and others' emotions, manage them, and use them for productive activity – is also an important element of stress resistance. "Developed emotional intelligence influences the life success of the personality, as it includes: the subject's readiness to mobilize themselves for active activity (intra-personal EI), the ability to maintain friendly relations with others, preventing conflicts through regulating emotional expressiveness (interpersonal EI), and the ability for self-regulation" [38, p. 10].

Thus, the specificity of stress resistance in adolescence is determined by the combination of internal psychological changes and external challenges characteristic of this period. On the one hand, this is increased emotional vulnerability and self-esteem instability, which can amplify the reaction to stress. On the other hand, youth is a period of intensive formation of personal

resources, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, cognitive flexibility, and the ability for self-development. Understanding these features is critically important for developing effective psychological support programs and increasing the stress resistance of first-year students, which will allow them to successfully adapt to the university environment and lay a solid foundation for further psychological well-being.

5. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of various scientific approaches, a proprietary definition of stress resistance was formulated as an integrated and dynamic personality property. This property is manifested in the ability to effectively adapt to various stressful factors, while preserving mental and physical health, optimal performance, and social functionality. It was emphasized that stress resistance combines a complex of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological mechanisms that allow for adequate situation appraisal, resource mobilization, active application of coping strategies, and successful overcoming of challenges.

Based on the theoretical review of literary sources, key psychological conditions for the formation of stress resistance were highlighted, focusing on the interconnection between self-confidence, self-esteem, and the level of anxiety. It was shown that high self-confidence and positive self-esteem act as powerful internal resources, contributing to the constructive perception of stressful situations as challenges rather than threats, and the active use of adaptive coping strategies. Conversely, increased anxiety was identified as a destructive factor that depletes adaptive resources and complicates effective functioning. Attention was focused on the dynamic interaction of these components, where changes in one factor influence the others, creating an integrated system that determines the level of stress resistance.

Particular attention was paid to the specificity of stress resistance in adolescence (youth), which is a sensitive period for personality development and includes the university years. It was determined that this stage is characterized by a significant adaptive load associated with changing social and academic environments, an intensive process of identity formation, and psychological immaturity in the initial stages. The dynamics of changes in coping strategies among students were examined – from dominant avoidance in junior years to more active problem-solving in senior years, as

well as the change in sources of social support. It was concluded that, despite increased vulnerability to stress, adolescence has significant potential for the development and strengthening of stress resistance due to the plasticity of the psyche, the capacity for learning, and the formation of key personal resources such as self-regulation, hardiness, and emotional intelligence.

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