

SENSE OF SELF-EFFICACY AND STYLES OF COPING STRESS OF YOUNG SPECIAL NEEDS TEACHERS

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***Abstract.** The author presented the results of research on the sense of self- efficacy and styles of coping with stress young special needs teachers, who take cooperation with people with disabilities, and who are obliged to cope with adversity and to help in the fight against distress their dependents. Research conducted in quantitative strategies, using the normalized and standardized tests: GSES - Generalized Self - Efficacy Scale by Schwarcer and Jerusalem in Polish adaptation by Schwarcer, Jerusalem and Juczyński, and CISS - Coping Inventory for Stressful Situation by Endler and Parker, in Polish adaptation by Strelau, Jaworowski, Wrześniewski and Szczepaniak from 2009.*

***Keywords:** coping stress, sense of efficacy, special needs teacher, special pedagogy.*

Introduction

Research on sense of self-efficacy and styles of getting along with stress young special needs educators take current and very important topic. It is related to the specific functioning of a professional group particularly vulnerable to overcoming difficult situations, resilient and efficient activity even under pressure and in tough circumstances. As actors who share responsibility for the course of education and rehabilitation persons with disabilities, they establish and modify goals, aiming to deliver them to support the development and optimization of biopsychosocial functioning. A very important issue is therefore to examine whether outside the methodical workshop young teachers have adequate resources of personality and strategies that support their mechanisms of overcoming difficulties allowing making, maintaining and efficient finalization of activities (Paluchowski, 1982; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Coladarci, 1992; Gosselin & Maddux, 2003; Baysal, 2010).

Analyzing the results of research on the level of perceived stress at work, the teaching profession surpasses managers or business owners, and also ranks second in terms of the risk of heart disease and circulatory system (Kretschmann et al., 2004). Particularly determining factors include:

- responsibility – both as a subject of therapeutic – educational and didactic actions in a given time and space, as well as for its achievements and the potential development in the future;
- working time – basic teaching load (number of hours depends on the type of employment and position) classes should be made up by primarily planning and designing work in the selection of methods, techniques, teaching aids, professional development, participation in meetings of councils and assemblies, overtime and replacement or verification achievements of pupils;
- deadlines and responsibilities, and the pace of work – responsibility for the implementation of the curriculum at a certain number of hours of the subject and a different pace of acquiring skills by pupils. Performing additional functions, eg. caring interest groups, coordinating teams, delegates and others;
- environment – infrastructure, noise, collaboration, life publishing and others;
- assessment – a constant, systematic and/or periodic achievement and teacher performance;
- the prestige of the teaching profession – the aspiration to maintain the validity of the social rank of the job under adverse circumstances, including placed requirements by the employer but especially parents, lack of sincere cooperation and the shifting of responsibility for the child;
- stability of employment – the risk of job loss and limited prospects of the employment;
- remuneration - in Poland depends mainly on the career, it remains one of the lower paid professions.

Taking into account the above considerations, the results of research on the level of stress in the teaching profession (Rongińska & Gaida, 2001; Terelak, 2007; Schwarzer & Taubert, 1999) and data about professional burnout (Sęk, 2000 a, b; Korczyński, 2014; Hakanen et al., 2006), it is clear that with such a huge load the presence of stressors should be constantly monitored. The same applies to the level of stress and its impact on the standard of the performance of teachers, but above all emphasize the strengthening of the personality structures responsible for coping - overcoming difficult situations, such as self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, sense of coherence to shape appropriate strategies to reduce the level of stress or alleviate its effects and to develop pro-health action (Juczyński & Ogińska - Bulik, 2010).

Theoretical background

The essence of personality lies in the different ways of perceiving the situation of the people and the different patterns of behavior that are shaped in accordance with these different insights. Big impact on the understanding the nature of existence had self-efficacy definition created by Bandura in the 70s of the last century. Action man began to understand as the perception of the valuations situation positively designating the purpose for which achievement shall be taken and continues to act even in difficult circumstances. The sagacious feeling of possibility to overcome the difficulties on the way to success - the belief in their own abilities causative called a sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997, 1999). In 1981, Kazimierz Obuchowski divided sense of the effectiveness from efficiency. He emphasized the different status between both theoretical terms that are very close to each other:

- Efficiency is to maintain the effectiveness in terms of increasing difficulty,
- The effectiveness is the efficiency of the objectives in certain circumstances (Obuchowski, 1982). However, the original understanding of Bandura's self-efficacy (dealing inseparably efficiency measures and their effects) and an attempt to specify the nature of the activities undertaken in difficult situations, understood as styles coping with stressors gave base to the research of their own. It is based on the transactional theory of stress understanding created by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which makes the perception of the difficult circumstances dependent on disposing of certain personal resources (mostly cognitive). This allows the specific assessment of the situation and the opportunities it brings with it. The specific situation gaining value on the scale of difficulty then the entity shall apply the preferred style aiming to overcome the difficulties. Thus, coping with stress is one of the defense mechanisms and is defined as a characteristic of the individual, relatively permanent ways remedial action undertaken in order to overcome the difficult situation (Endler & Parker, 1990). Additionally, it is that included modifying agent is dependent on the conditions of the operation's situation of the unit in the surroundings (Wrześniewski, 1996). Relating this to the specific work as a special education teacher should be taken into account in the assessment of self-efficacy, or taking remedial action nature of work in the conditions of a particular load (discussed in the introduction of the article), but above all, the essence of working with a person with incomplete efficiency, where the activities are task-oriented, specialist, purposeful, planned, aiming to overcome the difficulties (resulting for

example from the same disability), and efforts are characterized by a high risk of failure or error. Implementation of educational activities reminds permanent struggle with adversity with increased responsibility, where it seems necessary to have a high sense of self-efficacy, which allows in all activities revalidation can be taken and continue in certain consequences of disability conditions, as well as the ability to cope with stress to maintain mental health and support their own body interactions in a difficult and long-term - lifelong therapy.

Own research on sense of self-efficacy and styles of coping with stress

Research on sense of self-efficacy and styles of coping with stress were carried out in the month of June 2016 year. The study involved a group of 47 people, teachers with a bachelor's degree, while graduates of secondary special education, persons who have certificated of university studies, simultaneously practiced the profession of special education teacher. The target group of the research were women aged 22-24 years (Table 1), with teacher training at a professional level - bachelor's degree. Due to the age requirements there are 47 persons (N = 47) analyzed in questionnaires). Examined persons have been living 5 years in a big city, but came from rural areas (9 persons), small cities (12 people) of large cities and urban areas (26 people).

Table 1 Summary of data on the age of the examined population

| Age | Number (N=47) | Percentage (%) |
|------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 22 | 9 | 19,1 |
| 23 | 31 | 66 |
| 24 | 5 | 10,6 |
| 25 | 2 | 4,3 |

The selection of the group was purposeful, voluntary participation in the survey. An attempt in numbers is sufficient to conduct statistical analysis and derive conclusions (Pilch & Bauman, 2001, p. 130). Studies have been embedded in the paradigm post-positivistic, quantitative strategy (Creswell, 2013, p. 32), using the correlation scheme, taking into account variables: self-efficacy, and coping with stress. They were used standardized and normalized research tools: a questionnaire GSES - Generalized Self - Efficacy Scale by Schwarcer and Jerusalem in Polish adaptation of Schwarcer, Jerusalem and Juczyński 2001, and Questionnaire Coping with stressful situations CISS - Coping Inventory for Stressful Situation by Endler and Parker in the Polish adaptation Strelau, Jaworowski, Wrześniewski and Szczepaniak from 2009. The first research tools measures the strength of the overall unit beliefs about the effectiveness of coping

with difficult situations and obstacles, classifying the results of individual sten scale from low to high by average. The second tool provides information on coping styles of examined with difficult situations. Distinguished style focused on the task, the style focused on emotions, style focused on avoiding taking two forms: the involvement of substitute activities and the search for social contacts. The study was conducted in accordance with applicable standards for tools, using appropriate norms. The study formulated the following research questions:

Question 1: What is the level respondents' self-efficacy?

Question 2: Which strategy for coping with stress dominates among respondents?

Question 3: Is there a correlation between the sense of self-efficacy and styles of coping with stress of respondents?

Put forward following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The respondents were characterized by a high level of self-efficacy,

Hypothesis 2: The respondents in the most difficult situations apply the style of coping with stress focused on the task,

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between the sense of self-efficacy and styles of coping with stress.

The results of own research

Comparing and analyzing the results of research on the level of self-efficacy it is noted that in the examined population is moving research results towards the high level, approx. 51 % of respondents received the results on a scale sten within the range of high performance from 7 to 10 sten. Taking also into account the average for the stringent results clearly states the advantage high results in the examined population (Table 2, Figure 1).

Table 2 Summary of results of research on the sense of self-efficacy

| N=4 7 | M | The Result Recalculated Scale in Sten | K | SKE | SD | Percent Results | |
|----------|-------|---|------|------|------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | | | Low (sten 1-4) | High (sten 7- 10) |
| | 29,87 | 7 (high) | 0,55 | 0,19 | 3,77 | 6,38 | 51,06 |

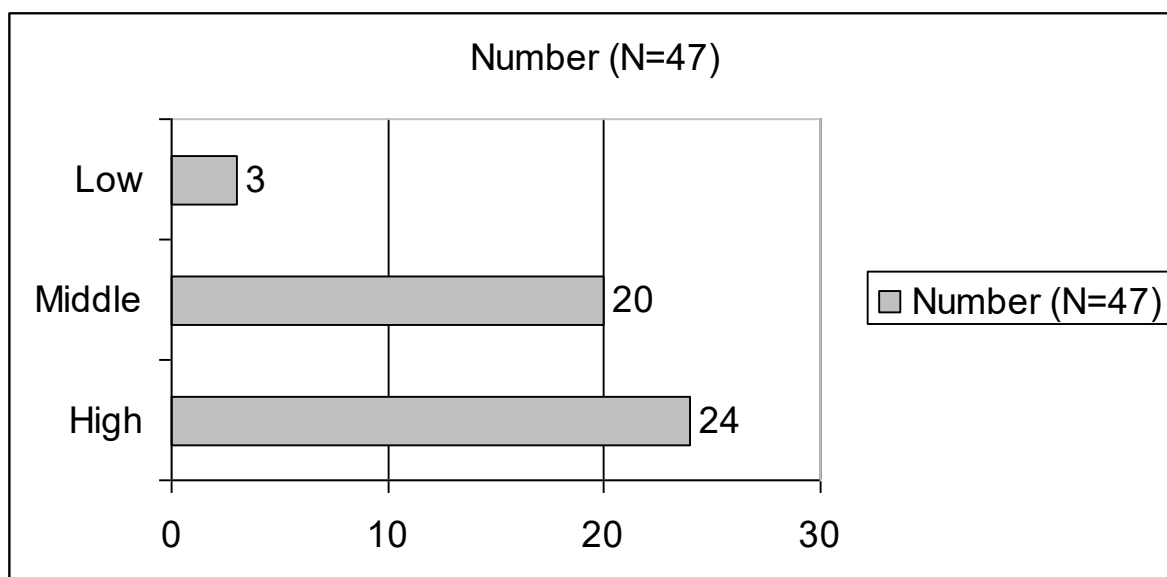


Fig.1 Summary of test results for a sense of self-efficacy on sten scale

Analyzing the results of research on the styles of coping with stress states that for the style-oriented task, and style focused on the search for social contacts (which is a sub-style style avoidance) recorded the same distribution of research results, while noting that for the all above mentioned styles that takes into account the research tool is observed most of the results of achieving high level (Table 3).

Table 3 Summary of the results of research on the styles of coping with stress

| N=47 | M | The Result Recalculated Scale in Sten | K | SKE | SD | Percent Results | |
|------|-------|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|-----------------|------------------|
| | | | | | | Low (sten 1-4) | High (sten 7-10) |
| SFT | 59,45 | 6 (medium) | -0,003 | -0,037 | 5,60 | 10,64 | 36,17 |
| SFE | 47,32 | 6 (medium) | -0,58 | 0,16 | 11,11 | 19,15 | 31,91 |
| SFA | 49,94 | 5 (medium) | -0,27 | 0,29 | 8,63 | 25,53 | 23,40 |
| ESA | 20,62 | 5 (medium) | 0,097 | 0,52 | 6,20 | 23,40 | 21,28 |
| SSC | 19,72 | 6 (medium) | 0,31 | -0,46 | 2,59 | 10,64 | 36,17 |

SFT - style focused on the task, SFE - style focused of emotions, SFA - style focused of avoidance, ESA - engaging in substitute activities, SSC - search for social contacts

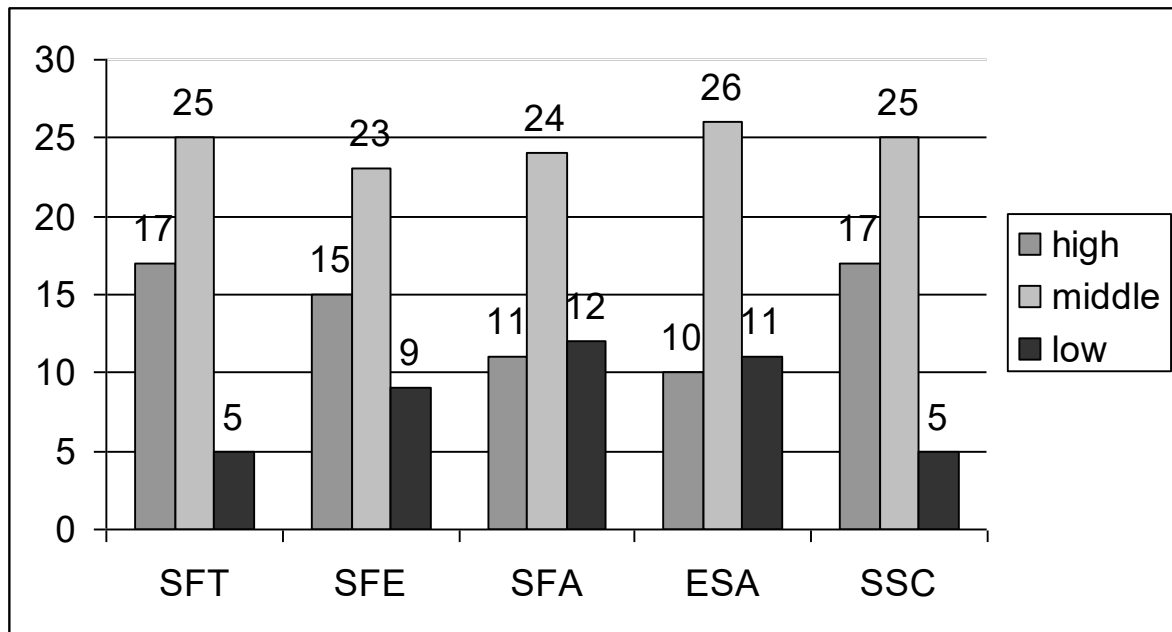


Fig.2 Summary of test results for different styles of coping with stress sten scale

Taking into account the raw results and the calculated results on a sten scale for all styles it is noted that in the studied population most results for all distinguished styles is within the results of the average (Figure 2, Table 3). It can therefore be presumed that in this population are different styles of coping with difficult situations, without any special advantage addressed by research tool. Comparing the test results obtained while testing the GSES and CISS states that most people received high scores for self-efficacy, and the average for the style of coping with stress concentrated on the task (Table 4).

Table 4 Summary of the results for the level of self-efficacy and the level obtained for a particular style of coping with stress

| N=47 | H-H | H-M | H-L | M-H | M-M | M-L | L-H | L-M | L-L |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| GSES – SFT(CISS) | 0 | 23 | 1 | 1 | 17 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| GSES – SFE(CISS) | 3 | 15 | 6 | 10 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| GSES – SFA(CISS) | 6 | 14 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| GSES – ESA(CISS) | 5 | 10 | 9 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| GSES – SSC(CISS) | 9 | 15 | 0 | 6 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 |

H- high, M- middle, L- low

When making a statistical analysis of results included in the tab. 2,3,4 there is established level of correlation p - value = 0.05 and df = 45. The significance

of the correlation found for SFT and SFE, the self-efficacy and style of coping with stress concentrated on the task correlated positively (increase self-efficacy implies an increase in the value obtained for style focused on the task), while a negative correlation was observed for self-efficacy and the style of coping with stress concentrated on the emotions (the increase in the level of self-efficacy is accompanied by a decrease performance for style focused on emotions). The values of the correlation coefficient for the level of self-efficacy and style focused on avoiding and its two sub-styles have not achieved statistical significance.

Using additional classification by J. Guilford, the observed correlation coefficients for self-efficacy and coping styles with stress following results were obtained:

- self-efficacy and style focused on the task - the correlation coefficient = 0.342129652, average correlation, positive;
- self-efficacy and the style focused of emotions - the correlation coefficient = -0.527415933, high correlation, negative;
- self-efficacy and styles focused of avoidance - correlation coefficient = 0.024902, correlation hardly perceptible, positive;
- self-efficacy and engaging in substitute activities - correlation coefficient = -0.12199, weak correlation, negative;
- self-efficacy and the search for social contacts - the correlation coefficient = 0.234445, weak correlation, positive.

Interpretation of research results

The GSES scale, in contrast to many scales that measure the sense of effectiveness in specific situations, measures the force of general beliefs about the possibilities of overcoming difficult situations and obstacles. The surveyed individuals obtained high scores for general self-efficacy, which means that they are capable of making and continue operations even in the face of mounting barriers, they are characterized by a deep belief that the actions taken are feasible and the target achieved.

Studies on styles of coping with stress CISS questionnaire show that young teachers have different styles in dealing with difficult situations, although relatively more likely to use the style focused on the task and the search for social contacts (most results achieving high level). This means that in case of occurrence of a difficult situation, they take action to change the situation or seeking support in social interactions. They take into account the results obtained for the level of self-efficacy it is presumed that the style of coping with stress is dependent on the occurrence or situation, chosen in a way that ensures the best possible deal with adversity, and the fastest possible lossless overcome the difficulties.

The study also provide important information regarding the correlation of variables. It is noted that there is a relationship between the level of self-efficacy and a particular style of coping with stress. The increase in self-efficacy is accompanied by an increase in frequency of use of the style of coping with stress concentrated on the task. At the same time increase the sense of self-efficacy is accompanied by decrease in frequency of use of the style focused on emotions, which means that higher levels of self-efficacy combined frequent-making in a stressful situation action to resolve the situation and/ or the pursuit of change and move away from style focused on experiencing emotions, fixing on themselves, wishful thinking and fantasizing.

An attempt to answer the research questions and hypothesis verification

The analysis and interpretation of research on the sense of self-efficacy and styles of coping with stress young educators have answered the research questions and the hypotheses verification has been done.

The answers to research questions:

What is the level of self-efficacy respondents?

The study population prevails a high level of self-efficacy.

Which strategy for coping with stress dominates among respondents?

The respondents use different strategies in order to optimize the effects of activities, although most of the high results note for style focused on the task and style focused on the search for social contacts.

Is there a correlation between the sense of self-efficacy and styles of coping with stress of respondents?

Statistically significant correlation exists between the sense of self-efficacy and style focused on the task and the style focused on emotions.

Verification of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The respondents were characterized by a high level of self-efficacy, has been confirmed.

Hypothesis 2: The respondents in the most difficult situations apply the style of coping with stress concentrated on the task, it is partially confirmed. The respondents use different styles of coping with stress, most high results, providing about making a particular type of activity recorded for the style focused on the task and the search for contacts.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between the sense of self-efficacy and styles of coping with stress, has been partially confirmed. Self-efficacy and style of coping with stress concentrated on the task correlated positively, while negative correlation was noted for a sense of self-efficacy and style of coping with stress concentrated on emotions.

Summary

These studies provide information that young people starting their careers as special educators evaluate their high efficiency. They can make efforts despite adversity, to continue and finalize the action. Their level of assessment is dictated partly on their own experiences, partly on social learning of coping strategies. Because of that, they can believe in themselves to choose the circumstances appropriate styles of coping with stress. Positive correlation between the sense of efficacy and style of coping stress oriented to the task of providing information that strengthens in young teacher self-efficacy at the same time increases the chances of use in the fight against the difficulties the task strategy, oriented to overcome the problems (at the teacher's work seems to be the key in the design of therapeutic and educational effects). While reducing the frequency of use style-oriented emotions, experiencing difficulties, moving away from the real world and zooming into the world of alternative reality - fantasy. It should be noted, however, that the focus on the task, using a disciplined style can in some circumstances lead to resource depletion, causing a feeling of personal destruction. To prevent this, it should be carried the impact of efforts to improve the assessment of their effectiveness, while introducing fundamental changes to the system in the teacher's work aimed at maximum reduction in the level of stress generated by stressors such as conditions of employment, workload, infrastructure and focus on working with children with special needs to overcome difficulties resulting from the nature of the activities carried out revalidation.

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