



WCPCG 2014

## Stress Coping of Patients with Substance use Disorder in Latvia

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### Abstract

Stress is a part of our everyday life and it plays an important role in causing various diseases. Studies related to aetiology of using psychoactive substances have shown that stress is one of strongest factor that provokes the use of addictive substances which emphasizes necessity of research about stress coping types for patients with addiction. Purpose of study is to examine stress coping among patients with substance use disorders in Latvia. 2 research tools were used: a demographic questionnaire and "The Ways of coping scale" (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). The results show that women use emotion-oriented stress coping. For women who have completed treatment, more specific ways of stress coping are accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance and positive reappraisal. Among men, the dominant stress coping strategy is problem-oriented stress coping. Male patients who have completed treatment use more accepting responsibility and planful problem solving.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Academic World Education and Research Center.

*Keywords:* stress coping, patients with addiction

### 1. Introduction

Stress is a part of our everyday life and it plays an important role in causing various diseases. Many studies have shown a connection between stress and origins of different addictions. Numerous researches are based on Lazarus et al. stress coping typology that divides stress coping into problem-oriented (focused on problem's altering or removing) and on emotion-oriented (focused on managing affective states associated with or resulting from the problem). Studies related to aetiology of using psychoactive substances have shown that stress is one of strongest

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factor that provokes the use of addictive substances which emphasizes necessity of research about stress coping types for patients with addiction. Effective stress coping skills are used to overcome different life stresses with the intention to sustain and maintain ones physical and psychosocial well-being. (Wagner, Myers and Melnych, 1999)

## 2. Problem statement

Stress coping ways relate to an individual's cognitive-affective strategy framework and it is a way how individual operate by its own physical, psychological and behavioral responses to stress (Weinstei, Brown and Ryan, 2009).

There are two essential function of coping – problem focused and emotion focused or either approach or avoidance type strategies. Several researchers have reported approach coping as involving and effort directed toward the stressful event which comprises direct action to work through stressful event for cognitive re-appraisal and acceptance (Roth and Cohen , 1986) .

This rational way of coping so to say action based and problem solving strategy is considered as adaptive coping, though avoidant coping is not. Emotional coping and avoidance is described as maladaptive or defensive, which involve psychological and/or behavioral ignoring, escaping and distortion (Elklit, 1996) .

Emotion-oriented coping is defined as individual's efforts aimed at reducing stress through emotional responses, for example, blaming oneself. Avoidance-oriented coping refers to activities and cognitive strategies used to avoid stressful situations, for example, distracting oneself by doing other tasks. Both emotion- and avoidance-oriented coping draw attention away from the stressor and hence are also referred to as disengagement coping strategies (Dashora, Erdem and Slesnick, 2011).

Several researchers showed that persons who commonly use problem focused stress coping strategy are less chance to develop substance abuse problems or they have more chance to overcome these problems. It should be noted that coping through substance use is regarded as limited in effectiveness, as repeated use of substances is detrimental to physical and psychosocial well-being (Wills and Hirkly, 1996). Based on research carried out, a person could use alcohol or drugs as an avoidance strategy for trying to reduce stress, depression or anxiety (Forys, McKellar and Moos, 2007).

## 3. Purpose of Study

To examine stress coping among patients with substance use disorders in Latvia.

## 4. Methods

2 research tools were used: a demographic questionnaire developed by the study authors and “The Ways of Coping scale” (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Cronbach's alfa for The Ways of Coping Questionnaire was 0.90 which means that the survey is consistent. Data were processed using ANOVA in SPSS program.

## 5. Results

The study was performed in all Latvia's institutions that realize the “28 days program” (Minnesota model). In the research 108 SUD patients were asked to complete questionnaires. Participants were aged from 17 to 67; M = 41.03; SD = 11.80; males – 61.8%; females – 38.2%.

There was found that 16.8% of patients have primary education, secondary education - 34.6% of patients, professional secondary education - 38.6% and 10% of patients have higher education. Only 29.7% of patients are employed, whereas others 70.3% – are unemployed. Successfully completed treatment 69.4% of involved SUD patients, there was dropouts - 25%. There was found that 5.6% of questionnaires were incomplete. Results of the Ways of Coping investigation are shown in the Table 1.

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