



Tartu, 3. March 2023

Report of the member of Thesis Council on the Thesis

CROSS-CULTURAL FEATURES COPING BEHAVIOR OF REPRESENTATIVES OF RUSSIAN AND OSSETIAN ETHNIC GROUPS

Submitted for the completion of a scientific degree of Candidate of Psychology
in Scientific specialty 5.3.5. - Social psychology, political and economic psychology
by **Julia Alexandrovna Afanasieva**

It is a pleasure to write this recommendation letter for acceptance of the scientific degree of candidate of psychological sciences submitted by Julia Alexandrovna Afanasieva.

General comments

On the one hand - the study of coping strategies as an important component of adaptive social behavior is important in connection with the presence of social instability-stability in society. On the other hand, the direction of a person's personal development, psychosomatic health, social adjustment and psychological well-being depends on coping strategies aimed at overcoming stressful situations in personal and society level. This thesis connects these two levels – societal and personal with overwhelming and expanding scientific field, namely – filling the gap and by studying specifically cross-cultural features of coping behavior of adult representatives of two ethnic groups living in two different places as multicultural cities with introducing and concentrating around the general term "ethnocoping".

The thesis addresses the highly relevant and vital areas of social psychological research integrating as a whole the current and classical domestic and foreign theoretical basis/research about socio-psychological features of coping behavior in the objective (ethnic group status, socio-cultural environment of residence) and subjective (sense-of-life orientations, type of ethnic identity) context arising new areas in the nowadays social psychology with theoretical and practical significance. The dissertation consists of three main chapters that are thematically coordinated as integral parts of the dissertation. The main results of the dissertation research were published in 27 scientific papers, 8 of them in the journals included in the list approved by VAK (Higher Attestation Commission of Russian Federation) and 9 in the Scopus/Web of Science during last five years and also presented at 6 regional, all-Russian and international scientific and practical conferences during years 2019-2020.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, main chapters, conclusion and summary with practical recommendations. The thesis is well structured and correctly presented. There are both a Russian and English part of the dissertation, whereby the thesis is written in good English utilizing suitable academic terminology. The dissertation comprises 173 pages in each language version

and 12 appendixes about used research methods and data analysis following the classic structure of thesis in science in a form of the monographic dissertation.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the research are works of leading authors as well as references from valid and relevant scientific literature based on 180 sources for the discussed field, whereby one third of references in English and two thirds in Russian as mostly current research. The key conclusions of the dissertation research are substantiated by overwhelming empirical data and stem from the research body. The dissertation has a clear contribution and interesting results and addresses an important issue. No major criticism regarding the overall quality of the work I should like to move on to the specific areas of dissertation with some issues which could be addressed to specify some issues through academical discussion.

Specific comments

Introduction to the main text is proper including the general theoretical and methodological foundations of the study highlighting the importance of the issue and the relevance of the research topic. This part is well written and provides a good background for understanding the rest of the thesis. The purpose and subject/object of the dissertation research have explained and as well as hypothesis of the research have presented. The thesis is inspired from both of the theoretical and methodological point of view.

Chapters one is theoretical background of the research; chapter two is methodological, and chapter three performed the research process and its results. Author represents the ideas and knowledge with sufficient theoretical background. Used research methods are appropriate to the aims and hypothesis formulated in the thesis.

First chapter introduces and discusses theories proposed in the field taking interdisciplinarity background of the study of coping behavior within different areas of psychology. The literature review is concise, covering the main relevant theories and empirical studies in the field of study. It is the evidence of the deep theoretical knowledge and good orientation in the problem discussed in the thesis. Sub-chapters concentrate to the analysis and synthesis of the body of research on coping behavior as multi-disciplinal phenomenon, concentrating to the characteristics of the key concepts of the study – meaningful orientations, ethnic identity, and analyzing mainly contemporary research in the field of cross-cultural studies of coping behavior basing on foreign and domestic empirical studies and describing the ethnopsychological and socio-cultural characteristics of research samples in order to apply it in further chapters.

The reading of the theoretical part of the dissertation raised questions for discussion I would take ask the candidate to answer the following academical discussion points during the academical defence process: What is a conceptual framework for understanding the key terms “cross-cultural features/peculiarities of coping behavior”?

Is the statement correct that the broad concept “coping behavior” defined in the theoretical part is used more narrowly in the methodological part of the work, reducing it to a two used research instruments? Comments are welcome.

Chapter two is methodological consisting of four sub-chapters. The aims were fulfilled, methods of research work are appropriate to the aims and hypothesis formulated in the thesis. In general, the coverage of the development of the quantitative methodology is thoughtful and coherent. The Author succeeds in connection of five already adapted and validated research methods and one developed research method as integrated whole for analysis of the research material, whereby one of the used research methods is called as a projective method consisting open-ended sentences. It raises a question – based on which features can this methodology be called

projective technique and why the Author decided to analyze the data based on age and gender differences using quantitative content analysis?

The formation of a sample groups was snowball sampling and randomized selection of representatives of two ethnic groups living in multicultural cities - in Vladikavkaz and in St. Petersburg.

Question: Whether and how the given research results can be extended to the whole sample of the representatives of the Russian and Ossetian ethnic groups?

In general, the presented results are reliable and well documented. I would like to emphasize that the dissertation study concerns a broad area of research, and their main value consists in the detailed description of the obtained results. Generally, the results are well presented with the appropriate statistical analysis and their interpretation is at a high scientific level demonstrating a solid understanding of the research field.

In the final section the general conclusions of the work are summarized. This chapter is well-argued, summarizing the key contributions of the research well with future directions for work in this area.

Last but not least – the possibility for comment during the academical defending process is connected with the introduction of the dissertation (pp. 231/232 or pp. 7) where the Author explain the relevance of the study (by the need to expand and supplement scientific ideas about the similarity and specificity of coping behavior of representatives of Russian and Ossetian living in the multicultural cities of Vladikavkaz and St. Petersburg) by asking question “Why?”. The Author has a possibility to answer to this question during the academical defending process.

Conclusion

In spite of the above-mentioned minor remarks for academical discussion, this PhD thesis is clearly the result of great deal of work and much effort has been devoted to deliver a high-quality thesis bringing new evidence and new scientific debates. The present thesis is a structured and independently written PhD thesis with identifiable contribution of the author, which meets the general requirements for this type of academic works and fulfils all requirements aimed for obtaining PhD degree. For the reasons, I recommend the PhD thesis entitled “Cross-cultural features coping behavior of representatives of Russian and Ossetian ethnic groups” by Julia Alexandrovna Afanasieva for acceptance and for the academical defence.

Associate Professor Kristi Kõiv, PhD University of Tartu, Estonia

