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Social support vs. stress-coping styles in the group of financial branch managers

Abstract

The goal of this article was to present a relationship between perceived social support and stress-coping styles among managerial staff – managers employed in financial branch. 51 managers employed in financial branch companies were examined. Social Support Scale – an experimental version by R.Cieslak was used for measuring social support, whereas stress-coping styles were analyzed with the use of CISS Questionnaire by N.S. Endler & J.D.A. Parker.

While analyzing the relationship between social support and stress-coping styles, the following dependences were obtained: there is a positive correlation between perceived emotional and task-oriented support and stress-coping avoidant style as well as there is a positive correlation between perceived practical support and stress-coping avoidant style. There is also a correlation between perceived emotional and practical support. Demographic variables taken into account such as age, sex, seniority or marital status indicate that only few of them differentiate a way of functioning in the stress situation. Such a variable is sex which modificatorily affects perceived support. Whereas any differences between people of different marital status, different age and different seniority length were not reported.

Keywords: social support, stress, stress-coping styles, manager, financial branch.

▪ Introduction

Stress is an inseparable element of human life which is experienced both in personal and professional sphere. Many studies and publications show that frequency of occurrence and the stress level in workplace have increased significantly. We more often speak about excessive stress occurring

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in a long-lasting way as well. Researchers from Yale University in the USA (NIOSH, 1998) indicated that even 29% employees experience bigger than average professional stress. They also quote a study conducted by Northwestern National Life in which as many as 40% respondents indicated that their work is very or extremely stressful. Reasons for this state lie in the fact that workplace and performed functions have become the source of many difficult and burdening situations for individuals. A group of professions exposed to severe stress is constantly increasing. Especially people working with other people are exposed to it, including those performing managerial functions (Gelles, 2004). Being a manager is associated with numerous stressful situations. It requires many competences and is connected with big responsibility. In financial branch it is connected not only with making financial decisions but also with responsibility for realization of business goals, co-workers and subordinates as well as building and maintaining a reliable image of public trust profession. Moreover, managers from the finance field must be able to join two opposite poles: a constant fight for business client and a difficult economic situation forming credit policy. There are many factors associated with coping with stress. This article has focused on one of these factors which is social support.

■ Issues of social support

For many years issues of social support have been the subject of researchers' interest. Still there is not one definition but there are controversies concerning theoretical expressing what social support means. Broad and pragmatic perspectives define support as help available for individual in difficult situations (Sarason, 1982) or as a consequence of affiliation of human to social networks (cf. Pommersbach, 1988). Other theories put emphasis on behavioural or processual character of support and reduce them to helpful behaviours (Gottlieb 1978) or define them as fulfilment of needs in difficult situations guaranteed by significant persons and reference groups (Caplan, 1981, Sarason 1980). Social support is a multidimensional variable. It can be described through: (after Payne & Jones, 1987):- support direction – whether support is given or received;- disposal – whether support is available if needed or whether it currently takes place;- description/evaluation – whether quality and size of social support is described or estimated; - kind – what its character is.

Authors working on the support issues (Scharzer, Lepiin 1998, Sęk 1997, Barrera) and analyzing the support variable distinguish its various dimensions such as sources of social support, types of support, received and perceived support.

■ Kinds of social support

There are many classifications for kinds of social support. In one of perspectives social support may have two kinds: the first kind is emotional support understood as experiencing empathy, desire and ability to trust someone, being surrounded by care, friendship and affection (Widerszal – Bazyl, Cieślak, Niemiec, 1995). It also includes searching and getting information used for assessment of one's own activity, information returned from the surroundings concerning oneself and obtaining confirmation among others. The second kind is practical support, which concerns receiving help in various life spheres in a particular way (e.g. financial help), getting information which is used in action, solving tasks and problems (e.g. data for correct task performance).

■ Sources of social support

Sources of social support mainly focus around two areas: professional and non-work environment (Cieślak, 1995). Within professional environment support comes from superiors and co-workers; whereas in non-work area – from family and friends from outside work. Data on the subject which sources of support play a positive role in prevention of negative stress effects are contradictory. Boyacioglu & Karanci (1992) and Sarason (1987) speak of a positive role of support coming from family. In the studies by LaRocco, House & French (1980) support coming from co-workers turned out to be more important than family or superiors. The studies by Kirmeyer & Dougherty (1988) and Russell et al (1987) indicate significance of support from superiors. An important source of support seems to be acquaintances from outside work but there is no information on this subject in the literature. Moreover there are no clear data indicating advantage and a particular role of some source of support. Therefore, in the presented studies support coming from all the sources was analyzed: from superiors, co-workers, family, friends from outside work.

■ Stress issues

The stress issues has lain within the sphere of interests of researchers for many years. For some time researchers' attention has been drawn by variables modifying the course of reaction to the stress situation. So researchers deal with factors which can weaken a negative effect of stress. In this context,

such variables are analyzed as: temperament (Strelau, 1995, Klonowicz, 1992), sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1995) or strictness (Kobasa, Maddi & Puccetti, 1983). These studies will be devoted to the role of two variables mediating in reaction to stress – stress-coping style and social support as well as their mutual relation.

According to Sely (1977) stress is each non-specific reaction of organism occurring as a response to actions of harmful stimuli so-called stressors. The reaction pattern was called *General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)*, which is the first defence line of organism against potentially harmful factors and it proceeds in three stages. At the first stage – alarm reaction including shock phase and shock counteraction, organism reserves are activated to cope with hazard. The aim of the second stage – resistance is to adapt to the stressor action. Organism concentrates on elimination of hazard; this process takes place at the cost of the other mental and physiological functions until using up reserves of energy. The third stadium – exhaustion occurs in case when hazard does not withdraw or repeats. As a result it may come to exhaustion of organism forces due to fighting with stress. A characteristic trait of *GAS* is reaction non-specificity, which means that organism reacts in the same way to each hazard, regardless of its source and kind (Ogińska-Bulik, Juczyński 2008).

In deliberations on stress we should not omit a theory by R. Lazarus & S. Folkman (1984) according to which mental stress, experienced by human, is a defined relation between person and surroundings and which is evaluated by that person as the one burdening his reserves and jeopardizing his good mood. In more modern stress definitions in the theory by Lazarus (1986) the term 'interaction' is exchanged for 'transaction'. It means that perception of hazard partly depends on situation and partly on what person contributes to situation.

■ Stress-coping styles

Lazarus & Folkman (1984) are also authors of relational theory of coping with stress. From this theory perspective, dealing with stress includes variable efforts of individual, which are burdening for him. In other perspective based on paradigm of individual differences (Eandler, Parker 1990) coping with stress is understood as relatively constant and individual-specific tendency for particular behaviours in stress situation which aim is to remove or reduce stress states. Coping understood as a style is presented by Eendler

& Parker (1990), who while referring to the theory by Lazarus & Folkman, suggested three stress-coping styles (Ogińska-Bulik, Juczyński 2008).

The first style, *task-oriented*, distinguishes persons who make an effort leading to solving a problem by cognitive transformations or attempts of changing a situation into the one which is easier to solve. The main emphasis is put on task or planning to solve a problem. The second style, *emotion-oriented*, is characteristic for people showing in stress situation tendencies to focus on themselves and their own emotional experiences such as anger, tension or sense of guilt as well as to wishful thinking and fantasizing in order to decrease experienced emotional tension. The aim of these actions is to reduce emotional tension connected with stress situation; however they can sometimes increase the sense of stress, cause the growth of tension or depression. The third style, *avoidant*, is characteristic for people who in stress situations have tendency to avoid thinking about event, worrying or experiencing that situation. This process may take place with the use of two forms of activity: distraction seeking (e.g. stuffing oneself, increased sleepiness, thinking about pleasant things, reading books or watching TV more often than before) or as social diversion (which may lead to avoiding necessity of solving stress situation) (Szczepaniak et al. 2005).

■ Social support versus stress

In stressful situations people need social support and seek for it – most often among family and friends (Sęk 1997). A way of perceiving social support, its availability and ability to activate modifies coping with stress. Variable of social support is a moderator and acts as buffer effect alleviating stress effects (Cieślak, 2011). Also cognitive assessment of stress depends, among others, on perceived availability of social reserves. Conviction about availability of support changes primary assessment by decreasing negative emotions and increasing the sense of challenge. It may also affect secondary assessment and cause the increase of resourcefulness (Lazarus, Folkman 1984).

Parallel to general stress conceptions there are theories concerning stress connected with work. According to one of them (House, 1981) stress at work is associated with health and social support modifies this relationship through: reducing the level of perceived work stress (main effect), being conducive to good mood (main effect) and reducing a negative influence of stress on health (buffer effect).

■ Method

■ Research group and the study course

51 people currently employed in financial branch at managerial positions took part in this study. Among the respondents there were 34 females and 17 males. Age bracket of responding managers was from 22 to 52 (mean age is 34). Total professional seniority among the responding managers was in the bracket between 3 to 25 years, whereas mean seniority was 12 years. Among the responding managers 5 had secondary education, whereas 46 people had higher education. On the day of the study 42 respondents remained married or had a partner; the other 10 people were single.

The respondents were informed about anonymity of the study and voluntary participation in it. After giving consent to participation in the study, the participants received a set of questionnaires to fill in.

■ Research tools

Demographic questionnaire

Our own questionnaire was designed for measurement of demographic variables. The questionnaire included questions concerning such demographic variables as sex, age, education, marital status, seniority (in total and at managerial position).

CISS Questionnaire (N.S. Endler & J.D.A. Parker, in adaptation by P. Szczepaniak, J. Strelau, K. Wrześniewski, 2005).

The CISS Questionnaire by N.S. Endler & J.D.A. Parker, in Polish adaptation by P. Szczepaniak, J. Strelau, K. Wrześniewski was used to measure stress-coping styles. It is the method which diagnoses stress-coping styles such as: task-oriented style, emotion-oriented style, avoidant style.

Test accuracy was confirmed by high internal conformity of particular scales (coefficients within 0,78–0,90) and satisfactory stability (correlation coefficients between two-time study at 2–3 week interval within 0,73–0,80). Within test accuracy factor accuracy was indicated. Theoretical accuracy was checked by searching for dependences between stress-coping styles and personality traits, temperament features, anxiety, intelligence, social competences and emotional intelligence. An analysis of criterion accuracy covered comparison of results in CISS of various professional and clinical groups.

The CISS Questionnaire consists of 48 statements concerning various behaviours which people may have in stress situations (Szczepaniak et al, 2005). At 5–degree scale a respondent determines frequency in which he undertakes a particular activity in difficult and stressful situations. The results are expressed in three scales: TS – task-oriented style; ES – emotion-oriented style; AS – avoidant style. This last style might take forms distinguished in two subscales: DS – distraction seeking and SD – social diversion.

Social Support Scale Questionnaire – an experimental version after modification prepared by Cieślak.

The Social Support Scale Questionnaire by R.Cieślak was used to measure social support. It is a modified scale of questionnaire 'What kind of support can you count on?' deriving from questionnaire: Psychosocial Work Conditions (Cieślak & Widerszal-Bazyl, 2000). Psychosocial Work Conditions is a set of questionnaires which measure three dimensions accepted in the model of stress at work presented by Karasek (1979; Karasek, Theorell 1990) as predictors of that stress: work requirements, range of control and social support.

Primary Social Support Scale allowed to measure perceived social support coming from work environment: superiors and co-workers. Current scale modification consisted in making measurement of perceived support possible also from sources outside work – family and acquaintances. Reliability and accuracy of primary tool version was confirmed in research conducted on representatives of eight professional groups – in total about 4000 people. While instruction and graphic form of scale were prepared on the model of tested in different studies Social Support Scale (Cieślak, 1998). The conducted factor analysis with Varimax rotation allowed to distinguish in the modified scale four subscales measuring relatively support from superiors ($\alpha = 0{,}94$), co-workers ($\alpha = 0{,}92$), acquaintances outside work ($\alpha = 0{,}89$) and family ($\alpha = 0{,}89$). Distinguished factors explained in total 61.41% variances.

Social support scale consists of 8 questions concerning various forms of support and help. In each question the respondent marks the extent he can count on help and support from superiors, co-workers, family and acquaintances outside work with the use of 5–degree scale.

■ Research questions

The goal of the presented in this study research results was to give an answer to the following research problems:

1. Does the relationship between social support (its particular kinds and sources) and the used stress-coping style occur?

2. Do managers differ between each other (due to sex, age, marital status and seniority) within the used stress-coping style?

■ Research hypotheses

Because of the above mentioned research questions the following research hypotheses have been formulated:

1. Perceived emotional support positively correlates with stress-coping task-oriented style.

2. Perceived practical support positively correlates with stress-coping avoidant style.

3. Perceived practical support correlates with perceived emotional support.

4. Perceived support coming from professional environment positively correlates with stress-coping task-oriented style.

5. Perceived support coming from non-work environment positively correlates with emotional and avoidant style of coping with stress.

6. Due to sex, respondents differ from each other in the used stress-coping style.

7. Due to age, respondents differ from each other in the used stress-coping style.

8. Due to marital status, respondents differ from each other in the used stress-coping style.

9. Respondents with different seniority differ from each other in the used stress-coping style.

■ Results

Before we present particular analyses aiming at verification of the proposed hypotheses, in the first place we will show the results obtained with the use of questionnaires: CISS and Social Support Scale (Table 1).

As it is shown in Table 1, family is perceived by the responding managers as the one with the biggest possibility of giving emotional support (M=4,48; SD=0,81) as well as practical support (M=4,02; SD=0,87). In the respondents' perception, to the smallest extent they can count on emotional support from

superiors (M=2,89; SD=0,87) and practical support from superiors (M= 3,17; SD=0,76).

Table 1. List of results obtained by the responding managers in questionnaires: CISS and Social Support Scale

		Managers	
		M	SD
SSC	Emotional support – superiors	2,89	0,87
	Emotional support – co-workers	3,53	0,77
	Emotional support – family	4,48	0,61
	Emotional support – acquaintances	3,93	0,70
	Practical support – superiors	3,17	0,76
	Practical support – co-workers	3,64	0,75
	Practical support – family	4,02	0,87
	Practical support – acquaintances	3,57	0,86

The responding managers in the stress situation most often use task-oriented style (M=65,47; SD = 6,91) and most seldom – emotion-oriented style (M=37,92; SD =8,95).

■ Social support vs. stress-coping style

To answer the main research problem concerning the relationship between a kind and source of perceived social support and the used in the stress situation stress-coping style, an analysis of r–Pearson correlation was conducted. Its results are presented in Table 2 and Table 3 (Table 2, Table 3).

Table 2. Interdependence between emotional support and its particular sources and stress-coping styles among the respondents

Support / Style of coping	emotional – superiors	emotion-al-co-workers	emotional – family	emotional – acquaintances	emotional – total
TS	0,303*	0,162	0,287*	0,137	0,351*
ES	–0,208	–0,80	0,284*	–0,39	–0,51
AS	0,055	0,254	0,94	0,319*	0,278*
DS	–0,40	0,160	0,106	0,252	0,175
SD	0,235	0,342*	0,04	0,382**	0,392*
* Correlation significant on the level 0,05 (bilaterally)					
** Correlation significant on the level 0,01 (bilaterally)					

As it is shown in Table 2, there is a positive correlation between perceived emotional support and stress-coping task-oriented style (r=0,351; p< 0,05).

However, at the same time there is a positive correlation between perceived emotional support and stress-coping avoidant style (r=0,278; p< 0,05), including correlation with subscale: social diversion (r=0,392; p< 0,05).

Analyzing particular sources of emotional support in the below mentioned group of respondents, perceived emotional support from family positively correlates with emotional stress-coping style (r=0,284; p< 0,05) and simultaneously it positively correlates with task-oriented style (r=0,287; p< 0,05). On the other hand, perceived emotional support from acquaintances positively correlates with avoidant style (r= 0,319; p< 0,05) and at the same time it positively correlates with its subscale: social diversion (r= 0,382; p< 0,01). Perceived emotional support from co-workers also positively correlates with the subscale of avoidant style: social diversion (r=0,342; p< 0,05). The studies also showed an important correlation between perceived emotional support from superiors and task-oriented style (r=0,303; p,0,05).

Table 3. Interdependence between practical support and its particular sources
and stress-coping styles among the responding managers

Style of coping \ Support	practical – superiors	practi-cal-co-workers	practical – family	practical –acquaintances	practical – total
TS	0,284*	−0,48	0,162	0,29	0,169
ES	0,11	−0,92	0,328*	−0,27	0,98
AS	0,88	0,226	0,190	0,332*	0,332*
DS	−0,006	0,085	0,225	0,321*	0,256
SD	0,240	0,338*	0,81	0,366**	0,396**
* Correlation significant on the level 0,05 (bilaterally) ** Correlation significant on the level 0,01 (bilaterally)					

As it is shown in Table 3, there is a positive correlation between perceived practical support and stress-coping avoidant style (r=0,332; p< 0,05) and its subscale: social diversion (r=0,396; p< 0,01).

Analyzing particular sources of practical support, in the below mentioned group of respondents, perceived practical support from family positively correlates with emotional stress-coping style (r= 0,328; p< 0,05). On the other hand, perceived practical support from acquaintances positively correlates with avoidant style of coping with stress (r= 0,332; p< 0,05) and at the same time it positively correlates with both subscales: social diversion (r= 0,366;

p< 0,01) and distraction seeking (r=0,321; p< 0,05). Also perceived practical support from co-workers positively correlates with the subscale of avoidant style: social diversion (r=0,338; p< 0,05). Perceived practical support from superiors is associated with stress-coping task-oriented style (r=0,284; p< 0,05).

There is also correlation between perceived practical support and perceived emotional support (r=0,779; p< 0,01).

Table 4 and Table 5 present the above indicated research results concerning the relationship between support coming from professional and non-work environment and stress-coping styles (Table 4 & Table 5).

Table 4. Interdependence between support coming from professional environment and stress-coping styles among the responding managers

Style of coping \ Support	practical – superiors	emotional – superiors	practical – co-workers	emotional – co-workers
TS	0,284*	0,303*	−0,48	0,162
ES	0,11	−0,208	−0,92	−0,80
AS	0,88	0,55	0,226	0,254
DS	−0,006	−0,40	0,85	0,160
SD	0,240	0,235	0,338*	0,342*
* Correlation significant on the level 0,05 (bilaterally)				

Table 5. Interdependence between support coming from non-work environment and stress-coping styles among the responding managers

Style of coping \ Support	practical – family	emotional-family	practical – acquaintances	emotional – acquaintances
TS	0,162	0,287*	0,29	0,137
ES	0,328*	0,284*	−0,27	−0,39
AS	0,190	0,94	0,332*	0,319*
DS	0,225	0,106	0,321*	0,252
SD	0,81	0,004	0,366**	0,382**
* Correlation significant on the level 0,05 (bilaterally)				
** Correlation significant on the level 0,01 (bilaterally)				

■ Demographic variables vs. stress-coping styles

In order to verify additional variables concerning differences within the stress-coping style between the respondents of different sex, age, seniority

and personal situation, t–Student test and r–Pearson correlation were used as the method of statistical analysis.

An analysis in the studied group showed that there is no significant relation between the stress-coping style and age and seniority. Regardless of the number of years worked and the respondents' age, any dependence within the choice of strategy of dealing with stressful situations was not reported.

It was also analyzed whether managers' sex diversifies them between each other in the choice of strategy of coping with stress. Comparative results with the use of t-Student test are shown in Table 6 (Table6).

Table 6. Comparison of results obtained by the responding females
and males in CISS questionnaire

Sex / Style of coping	F		M		Mean differences	t	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
TS	65,5	6,66	65,41	7,59	–,08824	–,043	,966
ES	40,79	8,32	32,17	7,38	–8,61765	–3,613	,001
AS	40,91	8,17	34,05	9,45	–6,85294	–2,678	,010
DS	15,05	4,27	12,70	6,02	–2,35294	–1,612	,113
SD	18,23	3,81	14,70	3,85	–3,52941	–3,105	,003

As the conducted analysis shows, sex to some limited extent diversifies the respondents within the choice of stress-coping style. This difference manifests itself in emotion-oriented style and in the subscale of avoidant style – social diversion. The obtained results show that females (M= 40,79; SD= 8,32) more often than males (M=32,17; SD=7,38) in stressful situations use the emotion-oriented style t (19)=-3,61; p<0,05. It is similar in case of the social diversion style. Here, females (M=18,23; SD=3,81) much often than males (M=14,70; SD= 3,85) incline to this kind of activity in stressful situations t (19)=-3,53;p<0,05.

It was also analyzed whether personal situation – remaining in a close relationship or not, diversifies managers between each other in the choice of stress-coping strategy. Comparative results with the use of t-Student test are shown in Table 7 (Table7).

As it is shown in Table 7, there are no significant differences in the choice of stress-coping style between people remaining in a close relationship and single people.

Table 7. Comparison of results obtained by the respondents remaining in a close interpersonal relation and those not remaining in relationships in CISS questionnaire

remaining in close relation / not remaining in close relation / Style of coping	Remaining in relation		Not remaining in relation		Mean differences	t	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
TS	65,92	6,97	63,60	6,65	2,32683	,954	,345
ES	39,34	9,13	32,10	5,15	7,24146	2,402	,020
AS	39,07	9,25	36,80	8,82	2,27317	,702	,486
DS	14,51	5,27	13,30	3,65	1,21220	,685	,497
SD	17,02	4,18	17,20	4,18	–,17561	–,119	,906

■ Summary

The results of the conducted research indicate occurrence of a few significant dependences between a kind of received support and stress-coping style.

Data concerning the relationship between perceived emotional support and stress-coping style are ambiguous. In fact, there is a positive correlation between perceived emotional support and task-oriented style according to the accepted hypothesis but at the same time there is correlation with avoidant style and social diversion (shown in Table 2). So, perceived possibility of experiencing empathy, opportunity to trust someone, being surrounded by care, friendship, affection, getting returned information are associated with the choice of two different stress-coping strategies: task-oriented and avoidant. Some concentrate on action in order to solve a task and cope with it, whereas others have a tendency to put aside a problem and focus on keeping social contacts.

There is a positive correlation between perceived practical support and avoidant style of coping with stress (Table3). So, experiencing help in various life spheres and in a specific way e.g. borrowing money, accomplishing part of a task, collecting information which can help in dealing with some tasks and problems like information how to solve a task properly or where to look for necessary materials is associated with the choice of such a strategy which is connected with avoiding thinking, worrying or experiencing that situation.

That process may take place with the use of two forms: distraction seeking e.g. stuffing oneself, increased sleepiness, thinking about pleasant things, reading books or watching TV more often than before or as social diversion. They, in turn, may lead to avoiding necessity of solving stressful situation. Only practical support from superiors is connected with task-oriented way of coping with stress.

In the light of these studies, there is a relationship between perceived source of support and stress-coping style. Perceived emotional or practical support from family, acquaintances, co-workers and superiors correlates with a determined stress-coping style.

According to the presented studies there is a correlation between perceived emotional support and perceived practical support. Explanation of this dependence requires a further verification. Perhaps personality traits have influence on perceived social support and therefore people who perceive that they have emotional support also see that they have practical support. Furthermore, the relationship between practical and emotional support is always perceived in each source of support. Perhaps some people can also build interpersonal relations and support networks more efficiently than others and among them there are people who can potentially give both emotional and practical support. It is also possible that in social contacts those people are driven by the rule of maximization and are involved in keeping and cultivating only those contacts in which they can count on each kind of support.

Analyzing the obtained results (Table 4) it is worth emphasizing a source of support such as professional environment – namely superiors and co-workers. Perceived receipt of both emotional and practical support from superior is associated with choosing stress-coping task-oriented style. Therefore both practical help, tips, tools or information and showing interest by superior are manifested in the fact that those people undertake actions to reduce stressful situation. It might be directly connected with the superior himself who on the one hand motivates and on the other hand expects effects and accounts for work. So he anticipates an action oriented at results – in this case solving the problem which is the main source of stress.

Whereas support coming from co-workers is associated with avoidant style manifested in searching for social contacts. Regardless of a kind of received support from co-workers, the respondents focus on looking for contacts with others to overcome stress. It might be caused by the fact that co-workers who experience similar events and stress situations know specificity of work and occurring problems and they are some kind of support group for

a person experiencing stress. Tough, stressful situations are among many ones in which individuals have a tendency to search for social contacts with people who are like them and with similar experiences. Then, keeping in touch with those people will be the factor weakening the sense of stress. Almost completely different strategies are chosen by people for whom the source of support is family and friends. The fact of perception of getting support from acquaintances, both practical and emotional, is connected with avoidance of facing a difficult situation. This avoidance takes a form of undertaking various substitute actions and keeping social life as well. Certainly, it is worth broadening the research range on this subject in order to explore at least the reason for that state. One of arising hypotheses explaining this might be the fact that generally acquaintances are associated with pleasant situations, spending nice time and relaxation. It is similar in case of substitute actions which allow to forget a problem without necessity of coping with it. Whereas family is the community which is generally associated with being surrounded by care and interest. Therefore perceiving availability of this support source might be connected with more frequent choice of emotional stress-coping style as the most associated with that source and typical for it.

The taken into account demographic variables such as age, sex, seniority or marital status show that only few of them diversify the way of functioning in the stress situation. Such a modifying variable is sex. The study shows that females more often resort to emotional way of coping with stress manifested in concentrating on their own mood, desire to improve it and contacts with others based on positive relations. Moreover, females more often focus on searching for these contacts (Terelak, 1997). In the stress situations women more often than men use the method of avoiding a problem and concentrate on social contacts.

However, any differences between people of different marital status were not reported. Remaining in a close interpersonal relation or not does not seem to be a sufficient variable modifying the way of action.

Similar lack of relation occurs in case of age and seniority. The first and the other variable do not affect the way of choosing strategy of coping with stressful situation.

Certainly, it is worth conducting similar studies on a bigger sample as well as taking into account additional variables which can be connected with the choice of style of reacting to stress such as personality variables.

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