

Gender Schemas and Stress-Coping Styles

Abstract

This article reports on the findings of a study on the empirical verification of the hypothesis regarding a stronger impact of gender over sex on coping with stressful situations. Gender has been operationalized into S. Bem's gender schemas. Multiple regression analysis confirmed the hypothesis for the three measured styles of coping with stress.

Key words: *sex, gender schemas, stress-coping styles, education.*

Hypothesis

Coping with stress is one of the indicators of the proper functioning of women and men in social situations. Outside of academia, in the cultural discourse of everyday life, we can identify a stereotype which states that women have a greater difficulty than men in tackling problems that arise from the heavy burdens associated with stress. Or the other way round, that men are better at overcoming stress. This stereotype has been corroborated by research conducted in preparation of the Polish adaptation of the test 'Coping with Stressful Situations' (J. Strelau, A. Jaworoska, K. Wrześniewski, P. Szczepaniak, 2009). Out of four styles of coping with stressful situations, this test distinguishes one functional style – task-oriented, as well as three non-functional styles – emotion-oriented and avoidance-oriented (in two versions). In comparison with men, women in different age groups systematically scored higher-level indicators of non-functional styles (J. Strelau, A. Jaworoska, K. Wrześniewski, P. Szczepaniak, 2009, p. 56). Thus the stereotype that women react either emotionally by fleeing is reinforced. However, since this data does not reveal intersexual differences in the range of task-orientated style indicators,