The specifics of dyadic coping in pairs of partners with disabilities

Sevastyanova Ulyana

Funding: The reported study was funded by RFBR according to the research project № 18-313-00243

We consider dyadic coping in a couple with a disabled partner a relevant process of conjoint effort to address challenges and stress that effects both partners, implies a different degree of their involvement caused by one partner's disability and aimed to cope with a difficult life situation and maintain current relationships.

A theoretical analysis enabled us to present dyadic coping as a multicomponent construct consisting of three blocks: subjective (both partners' assessment of a stressful situation, their ideas how to cope with it and what coping resources are available), evaluative (dyad members' feelings and states caused by stress in general, its particular aspects, outcomes of both individual and conjoint coping efforts), behavioral (stress signals that alert a partner to a stressful situation and are an external display of elements from a subjective block, a subject's and a partner's particular actions and behavior strategies).

The research tools used include:

Bodenmann's Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI, 2008) in Russian adaptation by Kryukova, Ekimchik, 2017; FACES-3 Scale (Olson, Porner and Lavee; in adaption by Perrez, 1986 (Eidemiller ,Dobryakov, Nikolskaya, 2003)).

The empirical evidence of the study is 28 couples with one partner having a disability. The control group is 17 couples including respondents with normative development (M = 36,5).

Statistically significant results obtained in this study imply that a subject's delegated coping is more pronounced (U= 248,5; p=0,034) in a dyad with normative development (M=8,07; SD= 1,2) rather than in that including two disabled partners (M=6,9; SD= 1,89).

A subject's (U= 32; p=0,000) (M=16,21; SD= 3,22 in contrast to M=8,92; SD= 1,7) and a partner's (U= 142,5; p=0,0001) (M=15; SD= 4,12 in contrast to M=10,21; SD= 0,89) negative coping is more clearly expressed in a dyad with one disabled individual.

The main criterion for family functional and role consistency is family equilibrium level. Couples including one disabled partner are characterized by its lower level (54% in contrast to 90%).

Statistical analysis of differences in aspects of the dyadic psychological well-being

scale	dyads include disabled partners (M)	Dyad of typical devel oping partne rs (M)	The value of the criterion of Mann-Whitney (U)	p-level
cohesion	32,53	36,29	247,5	0,03
border	4,68	6,86	94	0,000
time	3,68	2,5	157,5	0,000
interests and leisure	5,79	7,86	175,5	0,001
leader-ship	6,23	4,86	245	0,03
control	5,57	7,64	212,5	0,007
discipline	4,05	5,93	225	0,01

Couples with normative development demonstrate a better performance on unity, personal boundaries, interests and leisure activities, control, and discipline parameters. This group is also characterized by rigid boundaries with one's environment while their roles can easily switch to face a particular life situation, all decisions are made collectively.

Dyads with a disabled partner show a contrasting picture of family functional and role consistency. They are characterized by unstable and permeable boundaries and a greater focus on environmental interaction; a leader can be easily identified in these couples, control is sole, partners' roles are tightly defined. This suggests a low level of both one's adaptation and a dyad's equilibrium as compared to the normative development group.

The correlational analysis showed numerous correlations that bring together cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components in a sample of dyads with a disabled partner. However, no statistically significant correlations between the study parameters are identified in the normative development group. We assume this fact suggests quality peculiarities of psychological well-being among couples with a disabled partner.