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Psychological Resources for Coping with Fear of COVID-19 and Negative Psychological Emotional States among Students of Russia and Kazakhstan

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The article presents the analysis results of stress resistance and basic beliefs as psychological resources for coping with fear of COVID-19 and negative psychological and emotional states on the sample of Russian (N=2310) and Kazakh (N=500) students (71.2% — women, average age 19.7). A higher level of stress resistance and basic belief expression in Benevolence of the World Around and Perceiving the World as Meaningful and Social Justice among Kazakh students in comparison with Russian ones is revealed, which is determined by the peculiarities formed in the conditions of the nomadic lifestyle of the Kazakh culture, based on the principles of mutual support and mutual assistance, trust and openness. It is shown that, regardless of the country and gender, high level of stress resistance and expression of basic beliefs are accompanied by lower indicators of fear of COVID-19 and the absence of negative psychological and emotional states associated with it, which suggests the universality of these psychological resources as a buffer that mitigates the traumatic effect of the pandemic situation.

Keywords: psychological resources, stress resistance, basic personal beliefs, pandemic, coronavirus disease, fear of COVID-19, negative psychological and emotional states, Russian students, Kazakh students, Russian culture, Kazakh culture.

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Психологические ресурсы совладания со страхом перед COVID-19 и негативными психоэмоциональными состояниями у студентов России и Казахстана

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Актуальность исследования обусловлена наличием противоречия между осознанием значимости ресурсного потенциала личности в условиях распространения инфекционных заболеваний и недостаточной изученностью психологических ресурсов преодоления страха перед COVID-19 в кросскультурном контексте. Цель исследования — изучение стрессоустойчивости и базисных убеждений личности как основных психологических ресурсов совладания со страхом перед COVID-19 и негативными психоэмоциональными состояниями у студенческой молодежи России и Казахстана. В исследовании участвовали 2310 российских и 500 казахстанских студентов (71,2% — девушки, средний возраст — 19,7). Выявлен более высокий уровень выраженности стрессоустойчивости и базисных убеждений в Благосклонности, доброжелательности мира и Осмысленности, справедливости мира у казахстанских студентов, по сравнению с российскими, что детерминировано особенностями сформировавшейся в условиях кочевого образа жизни казахской культуры, в основе которой лежат принципы взаимоподдержки и взаимопомощи, доверия и открытости. Показано, что независимо от страны и пола высокий уровень стрессоустойчивости и выраженность базисных убеждений сопровождаются более низкими показателями страха перед COVID-19 и отсутствием связанных с ним негативных психоэмоциональных состояний, что свидетельствует об универсальности данных психологических ресурсов как буфера, смягчающего травмирующее влияние ситуации пандемии.

Ключевые слова: психологические ресурсы, стрессоустойчивость, базисные убеждения личности, пандемия, коронавирусное заболевание, страх перед COVID-19, негативные психоэмоциональные состояния, российские студенты, казахстанские студенты, российская культура, казахстанская культура.

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Introduction

Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) as a source of stress and negative emotional experiences.

The coronavirus pandemic now acts as a massive collective and global traumatic stressor [13]. COVID-19 causes stress for many reasons. Among them are the perception of a threat to life and health (one's own or relatives and friends), worries related to actual or potential material difficulties, isolation situations, disrupted routines of personal and social life, etc. [18; 26]. Thus, the pandemic blocks the satisfaction of basic human needs for security, certainty, stability, control over one's life.

During the pandemic the number of people with psychopathological symptoms such as sleep disorders, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic disorders increased among the population [4; 18; 26]. Young students were especially vulnerable to the pandemic. Along with general stress factors, researchers note specific ones: mass implementation of e-learning, social and material restrictions, negatively affecting the mental health of students [22].

The negative emotional background caused by the coronavirus in society raises the question of the human capacity for coping with the stress of the pandemic.

A resource-based approach to the study of coping with negative emotional states.

The problem of an individual's psychological resources was addressed by many Russian researchers: V.A. Bodrov, N.E. Vodopyanova, A.N. Demin, L.G. Dikaya, T.L. Kryukova, D.A. Leontiev, V.I. Morosanova, K. Muzdybaev, S.A. Shapkin and others. They considered a resource both as an opportunity/means of overcoming stresses, and as an element of self-regulation of activity and behavior. Thus, D.A. Leontiev singles out a group of stability resources or value-semantic resources (basic beliefs, meaningfulness of life, etc.) due to which a person acquires a sense of confidence, positive self-esteem, ability to make independent decisions, and a group of self-regulation resources (locus of control, tolerance to uncertainty, propensity to risk, etc.) which determine self-regulation strategies in difficult life circumstances [12]. At the same time such psychological phenomena as optimism and resilience (or stress tolerance) are included in both resilience and self-regulation resources [12], thus confirming the close connection between both groups of resources.

Other researchers also emphasize the importance of studying the resource potential of stress resistance and the belief system of a personality in the process of overcoming life difficulties, including in the conditions of illness [1; 8]. A close connection between basic beliefs of a personality and coping behavior has been revealed: people with more positive beliefs, as a rule, more easily deal with posttraumatic experiences, use more active and less passive coping-strategies [32]. According to R. Janoff-Bulman's theory of psychic trauma, basic beliefs of the personality are an individual's implicit ideas about the universe, other people and himself, the formation of which begins in childhood and the formation of which is influenced by various factors [17], including culture.

Culture as a predictor of attitudes toward coronavirus disease.

It is known that culture determines a person's attitude to the world, things, events [30], including attitude to the disease [21; 25]. Of particular interest is the attitude to coronavirus disease among representatives of the peoples of the so-called post-Soviet space, whose culture has both similar and different features due to the commonalities and differences in their historical destinies.

Russia and Kazakhstan belong to the group of the Eastern European countries and are united by the presence in the culture of features of both East and West. However, the expression of these features in the cultures of Kazakhstan and Russia is different. For example, Kazakh culture is more inherent to the values of collectivism and masculinity than Russian culture [5; 23]. The individualism/collectivism dichotomy is particularly important in the context of infectious disease outbreaks, as there is evidence that collectivist social norms, such as conformism, promote adherence to stricter measures of quarantine, social distancing and hygiene. Collectivism thus has a positive effect on reducing the spread of COVID-19 [27]. Based on these data, we can suggest that anxiety about family and group members may lead members of collectivist cultures to experience a more pronounced fear of coronavirus disease. At the same time, another diametrically opposite assumption is also possible: the promotion in collectivist cultures of mutual dependence, moral responsibility and care for children, the elderly, the sick and the needy creates conditions that allow one to reduce the experience of fear and other negative emotional reactions associated with COVID-19 [24].

Masculine cultures are more focused on achievement, success, recognition and competition than feminine ones. Masculinity is traditionally associated with acts of courage, bravery, heroism, overcoming fear and "managing" risk [34]. We dare to assume that in masculine cultures, to which Kazakh culture belongs, there will be a lower level of experience of fear of COVID-19 than in feminine cultures, to which Russian culture belongs.

Thus, the analysis of the works of domestic and foreign authors allows us to conclude that science has accumulated some experience in studying the resource potential of humans under conditions of the spread of infectious diseases. However, there is a lack of research aimed at studying the relationship between psychological resources and level of fear of COVID-19 and negative psycho-emotional states in young people in a cross-cultural context.

The aim of the research was to study stress resistance and basic personal beliefs as the main psychological resources of coping with fear of COVID-19 and other negative psycho-emotional states among student youth in Russia and Kazakhstan.

It is assumed that similarities and differences in psychological resources for coping with fear in Russian and Kazakh students are determined by similarities and differences between Kazakh and Russian cultures.

Method

Sample. There were 2,810 participants in the study, 82.2% (2,310 people) from Russia and 17.8% (500 people) from the Republic of Kazakhstan. The sample included 71.2% (1996 people) of women and 28.8% (806 people) of men. Of those, 72.3% of women and 27.7% of men were from Russia and 66.4% of women and 33.6% of men were from Kazakhstan ($\chi 2(1) = 6.866$; $p=0.009$). Eight people gave no information about their gender. Students from different fields of study took part in the survey: future doctors, psychologists, social workers, engineers, economists, and many others.

The study was conducted in September-October 2020, in an online format, on the Qualtrics platform (https://www.qualtrics.com/) among university students in Moscow, Penza, Kazan, Smolensk, Khabarovsk in Russia and Kostanay in the Republic of Kazakhstan. In this study we considered it possible to neglect the existing differences between the mentioned Russian cities by the level of development of medical infrastructure, because, firstly, the fight against COVID-19 became a priority of Russian health care: all subjects of the Russian Federation were provided with necessary material funds to expand the bed fund, equip hospitals per number of inhabitants of the region, increase salaries of specialists working in the red zone, etc. [6]. And secondly, due to the spread of various forms of remote work and study, high availability of the Internet and its use for ordering goods and services, etc., the conditions of students' adaptation to the pandemic in the studied cities was similar.

The choice of the two countries for the study is due, firstly, to the different models of action of the states in the face of COVID-19. Kazakhstan used the Chinese scheme of action — the introduction of a strict quarantine regime, while Russia adhered to another model — the gradual introduction of restrictions to contain the spread of the epidemic [9]. Second, there are differences in the psychological characteristics of cultures between Russia and Kazakhstan [23].

Instruments. A modified and tested on a Russian-speaking sample in Russia and Belarus, the COVID-19 Fear Scale [28] consisting of 9 statements was used to measure the experience of fear of coronavirus disease. For example: "I cannot sleep because of fear of coronavirus-19". The degree to which the respondent agreed with each statement was assessed using a five-level Likert scale, where 1 was "strongly disagree" and 5 was "strongly agree". The total score was then calculated. We standardized the scores for the surveyed Russian-speaking sample based on the assumption that the data were normally distributed in the general population: we assigned the sum of 9 to 18 scores to the low level of fear (n=855), from 19 to 24 to the moderate level (n=998), and from 25 to 45 to the high level of fear (n=866). Among the respondents, 91 of them did not complete the fear scale. Cronbach's α coefficient is 0.84 and McDonald's ω coefficient is 0.86, which indicates that the used scale is highly reliable (self-consistent).

To identify other negative *psycho-emotional states* experienced by respondents during the pandemic, the questionnaire included the question "During the past month, because of COVID-19, did you feel more depressed, exhausted, lonely, nervous, angry?", which was tested in international studies [20; 31]. Each of these states was assessed positively or negatively.

The ability to cope with stressful situations was studied using the Brief Resilience Scale [29], which includes 6 statements. For example: "I tend to experience life's setbacks for a long time". The degree to which the respondent agreed with each statement was assessed using a five-level Likert scale, where 1 was "strongly disagree" and 5 was "strongly agree". The total score was then calculated, taking into account the fact that reversed Likert scale values were used for some of the statements [29]. In accordance with the instructions for processing and interpreting the results, their distribution was divided into three parts: 25%, 50% and 25%. Values corresponding to the first 25% were interpreted as low stress resistance, values accounting for 50% of the distribution meant normal stress resistance and the last 25% referred to high stress resistance. Consistent with our results, the sum of scores from 6 to 17 was attributed to low stress resistance (n=671), the sum of scores from 18 to 21 was considered as normal stress resistance (n=1110) and the sum of scores from 22 to 30 was interpreted as high stress resistance (n=662). 367 respondents did not complete the scale. The authors of the article received personal permission from the Scale developers to translate it into Russian, and this is the first experience of using the Brief Resilience Scale in Russia and Kazakhstan. For the scale, the values of Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω coefficients are 0.67 and 0.72 respectively, which indicates its acceptable reliability.

Basic personal beliefs were diagnosed using the Janoff-Bulman World assumptions scale (WAS) [19]. The questionnaire allows us to determine the expression of three basic beliefs that, according to the author, constitute the core of a person's subjective world and underlie a healthy sense of security, these are: 1) the belief that there is better than evil in the world; 2) the

belief that the world is full of meaning; 3) the belief in the value of one's self, the ability to control events and luck [19]. The questionnaire consists of 32 statements, the degree of agreement with which is rated on a six-level Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (6). The mean value of Cronbach's α across all subscales is 0.71.

The results of the empirical study were processed and analyzed using the statistical package SPSS v. 25. Student's t-test and Pearson's χ^2 criterion were used to assess the significance of differences between the samples, correlation and multiple regression analysis (stepwise method) was used to determine the relationships between the variables. A two-way analysis of variance was used to compare fear of COVID-19, stress resistance and basic beliefs in respondents of different gender in two countries (Russia and Kazakhstan). In our study, "fear of COVID-19" acted as a dependent variable, while "stress resistance" and "basic personal beliefs" acted as independent variables. In addition, "country" and "gender" were also independent variables.

Results

Level of fear and presence of negative psycho-emotional states in Russian and Kazakhstan students.

The analysis of the group mean values of the fear level obtained with the COVID-19 Fear Scale showed no statistically significant differences between the results of Russian and Kazakhstan students: 21.87 points (CO — 6.74) and 22.10 points (CO — 5.90) respectively (t(2629)=0.665; p=0.506). The final score for both groups was 21.91 (CO — 6.60). Regarding the experience of fear depending on the gender, the study found a statistically significantly higher level of fear in young women (22.69 points) compared to young men (19.98 points) (t(2622)=9.706; p<0.001) throughout the sample.

In relation to fear values, the two-way analysis of variance did not find statistically significant results of the interaction between the country of residence and gender factors (F(1,2619)=0.019; p=0.891).

Students who responded affirmatively to questions about worsening their psycho-emotional state had higher fear values compared to those who answered negatively to these questions: 25.93 vs. 20.49 for depressed (t(2285)=18.003; p<0.001), 26.13 vs. 20.87 for exhaustion (t(2264)=15.160; p<0.001), 23.96 vs. 21.03 for loneliness (t(2261)=9.266; p<0.001), 25.07 vs. 20.44 for nervousness (t (2304)=16.411; p<0.001), 24.54 versus 20.95 for discontent (t(2280)=11.274; p<0.001).

We will also introduce an integral index of students' psycho-emotional impairment due to COVID-19 using two categories: no knowledge of such impairment and the presence of such knowledge, whether it is a state of depression, exhaustion, loneliness, nervousness or discontent. According to the students' responses, 1,087 (38.7%) of them reported impairment in their psycho-emotional state, 1,224 (43.5%) gave a negative answer and 499 (17.8%) did not provide information. Accordingly, students who reported impairment in their psycho-emotional state had higher fear values compared to those who did not show such an impairment: 23.97 vs. 19.70 (t(2218)=16.128; p<0.001).

In relation to the fear values, a two-way analysis of variance found statistically significant results for the interaction between the factors of the country of residence and index of psycho-emotional impairment (F(1,2216)=4,931; p=0,026).

The data in Table 1 show the presence of the expression of negative psycho-emotional states depending on the country of residence and gender. Such states are more typical for Russian students compared to Kazakhstan students and for young women compared to young men.

Correlation of stress resistance level to fear level and negative psycho-emotional states.

The results of using the Brief Resilience Scale showed that the stress resistance value had higher statistical significance in case of Kazakhstan students (19.75) compared to Russian students (19.60) (t(2441)=2.429; p=0.015), and also higher in case of young men (20.60) compared to young women (18.83) (t(2436)=10.969; p<0.001). At the same time, the results of a two-way analysis of variance in relation to stress resistance values did not reveal statistically significant interaction between the country of residence and gender (F (1,2433)=1.504; p=0.220).

There is a negative correlation between fear and stress resistance values: r= — 0.312 (p<0.001). At the same time,

Table 1

Psycho-emotional states of students depending on the country of residence and gender

During the last month, because of COVID-19, I felt more:	Russia (n=2310)	Kazakhstan (n=500)	Young men (n=815)	Young women (n=2003)
Depressed, % (n)	25.3 (504)**	19.1 (74)**	14.2 (100)***	28.5 (479)***
Exhausted, % (n)	18.3 (363)**	12.1 (46)**	11.9 (83)***	19.6 (326)***
Lonely, % (n)	24.8 (491)	22.4 (86)	18.2 (127)***	27.1 (450)***
Nervous, % (n)	31.6 (637)*	25.7 (101)*	19.4 (136)***	35.3 (602)***
Angry, % (n)	23.1 (459)	21.7 (84)	17.8 (126)***	25.1 (418)***

*P<0.05; **P<0.01; ***p<0.001 (χ^2test)

this correlation is the characteristic of student youth regardless of the country of residence and gender.

Students who answered positively to questions about worsening their psycho-emotional state had lower values of stress resistance, compared with those who answered negatively to this question: 17.45 vs. 19.96 for depression ($t(2353)=14.681$; $p<0.001$), 17.25 vs. 19.81 for exhaustion ($t(2333)=13.082$; $p<0.001$), 17.85 vs. 19.88 for loneliness ($t(2331)=11.697$; $p<0.001$), 17.75 vs. 20.08 for nervousness ($t(2337)=14.822$; $p<0.001$), 18.15 vs. 19.76 for discontent ($t(2347)=9.063$; $p<0.001$).

Correlation of basic beliefs to the level of fear and negative psycho-emotional states.

The analysis of the mean values obtained on the scales of the questionnaire by Janoff-Bulman revealed higher rates for Kazakhstan students compared to Russian students on two scales: *General Attitude towards the Benevolence of the World* (4.05 vs. 3.91; $t(2435)=3.064$; $p=0.002$) and *General Attitude towards the Meaningfulness of the World* (respectively: 3.63 and 3.49; $t(2447)=4.420$; $p<0.001$); in young women compared to young men, only on the scale *General Attitude towards the Benevolence of the World* (respectively 4.01 and 3.73, $t(2430)=8.061$; $p<0.001$).

Regardless of the country of residence and gender, there are weak and mostly statistically insignificant correlations between fear rates and values on three scales of the questionnaire by Janoff-Bulman: $r = 0.025$ ($p=0.232$) between fear and General Attitude towards the Meaningfulness of the World, $r = 0.013$ ($p=0.526$) between fear and Belief about Self-worth and $r = 0.051$ ($p=0.013$) between fear and General Attitude towards the Benevolence of the World.

The stepwise regression analysis for fear as a dependent variable revealed three main predictors. The first of these, the psycho-emotional impairment rate, explains 10.6% of fear variance ($p<0.001$), gender was the second predictor, explaining 1.9% of fear variance ($p<0.001$) and the scale General Attitude towards the Meaningfulness of the World was the third predictor, explaining 0.4% of fear variance ($p=0.002$). The other independent variables (Country, General Attitude towards the Benevolence of the World and Beliefs about Self-worth) did not show a statistically significant increase in the proportion of variance explained. The resulting value of explained variance (adjusted R^2) for the fear variable was 0.128 (12.8%).

Another rate that requires verification is the relationship between three basic personal beliefs and the psycho-emotional states of students. The emotional impairment is associated with the lower expression of all three basic personal beliefs: $t(2281)=5.132$; $p<0.001$ for General Attitude towards the Benevolence of the World; $t(2290)=3.071$; $p=0.002$ for General Attitude towards the Meaningfulness of the World; $t(2255)=5.557$; $p<0.001$ for Belief regarding Self-worth.

The results of the two-way analysis of variance did not reveal any statistically significant differences in the expression degree of the basic personal beliefs depending on the country and rate of psycho-emotional impairment, and depending on the gender and rate of psycho-emotional impairment.

Relationship between stress resistance and basic beliefs.

Finally, we present the results revealing the relationship between the psychological resources we study: stress resistance and basic beliefs (Figure 1).

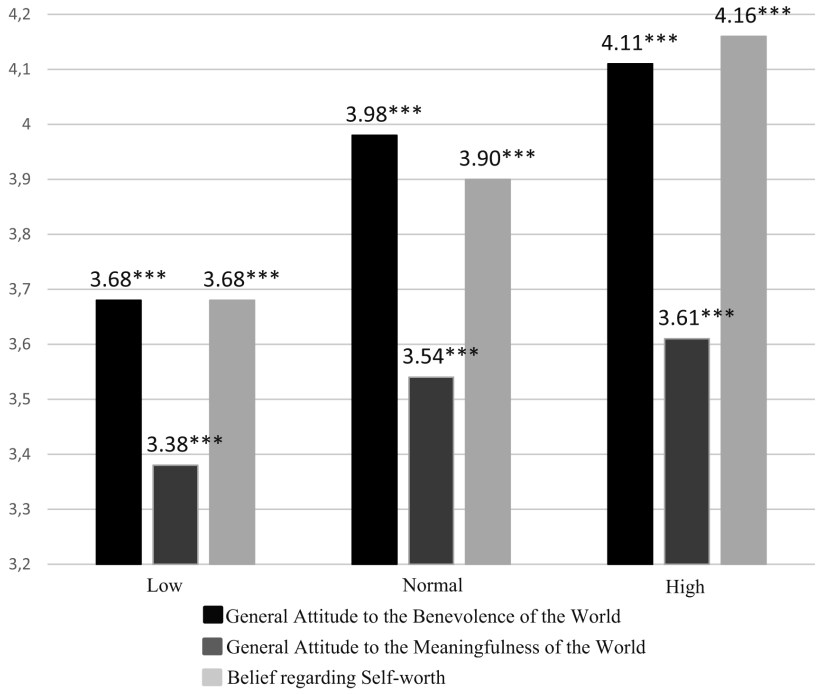

Fig. 1. Mean values of basic beliefs depending on the level of stress resistance

As shown in Figure 1, higher values of basic beliefs correspond to a higher level of stress resistance. The effect sizes (η^2) for General Attitude to the Benevolence of the World and General Attitude to the Meaningfulness of the World are insignificant: 0.039 and 0.026 respectively. The effect size for Belief regarding Self-worth is medium at 0.082.

The results of the two-way analysis of variance did not reveal any statistically significant differences in the degree of expression of basic personal beliefs depending on the country and level of stress resistance, and as well as depending on the gender and level of stress resistance.

Discussion

The absence of differences in the expression degree of COVID-19 fear between students from Russia and Kazakhstan may be related to fairly similar social policy strategies and public health support measures in both countries (quarantine, testing, development of vaccines and treatment technologies, etc.), as well as active public discussion of the most effective safety measures and counteraction to the spread of the disease [14; 15]. It is also possible that the same level of fear in Russian and Kazakhstan students can be explained by the fact that fear as a protective biological reaction of the body is more caused by individual-physiological than socio-cultural characteristics of the individual. The higher degree of fear of coronavirus disease in young women compared to young men in the whole sample is consistent with the research findings stating that the level of fear experience in women tends to be higher than in men [16]. Moreover, when looking at the interaction of two factors, gender and country, there were no differences in the intensity of fear experience, suggesting that the experience of fear is more strongly related to gender differences than to cultural differences.

However, Russians were more likely than Kazakhstanis to have experienced negative psycho-emotional states because of coronavirus in the past month. And the relationship obtained in the study between them and experience of COVID-19 fear indicates the presence of a generally more negative emotional background among Russian students, which may have been due to the higher (at the time of the survey) incidence of coronavirus infection among Russian residents [11] than among Kazakhstan residents [2]. It is likely that this emotional background among Russian students during the pandemic can be explained by the greater expression of individualistic tendencies in Russian culture than in Kazakhstan culture, which means that Russians rely less on emotional support and emotional help from others in critical situations [24].

What resources contribute to coping with fear and negative emotional states in the context of the pandemic among Russian and Kazakhstan students?

Students with *high levels of stress resistance* were found to have low levels of fear of COVID-19 and did not experience negative psycho-emotional states during the last month, which confirms the conclusion that stress resistance is an important psychological resource that reduces the vulnerability of people in stressful situations, which include the pandemic situation [1]. The universality of this resource being also that stress resistance acts as a buffer for the negative effects of COVID-19, regardless of the factor of gender and country of residence.

According to the results obtained by the Janoff-Bulman methodology, Kazakhstani students showed higher values of basic beliefs in *the Benevolence*, *Kindness of the World* and *Meaningfulness*, *Justice of the World* as compared to Russian students. It is likely that these differences can be explained by the peculiarities of nomadic Kazakh culture, which has retained its basic traditional norms and rules to the present day. The spiritual and moral perception of the Kazakh world is based on the principles of justice, equality, freedom, democracy [7], the need to see each other as support, mutual support, as well as the principle of "jatsynbau", which means trust, openness. "A man lives by man" is one of the commandments of traditional Kazakh society [10].

Students (regardless of the country of residence) with a high level of basic belief in the benevolence of the surrounding world were found to have a high level of fear of coronavirus disease. This pattern was more common among young men. Whereas among young women convinced of the benevolence of the world there are equally the same numbers of individuals with different levels of fear experience of coronavirus disease.

Interestingly, our findings partially diverge from those we obtained earlier in the first phase of the pandemic, in which the highest rates of belief that there is better than evil in the world were found in the group of individuals with low levels of fear expression [3]. It is possible that this discrepancy is due to sample characteristics. Whereas the previous study involved subjects of all ages, the present research sample includes only young students who, apparently because of their youth, experiencing fear of a disease that is dangerous for themselves and their loved ones, do not lose faith in the goodness and benevolence of the world around them.

Apparently, we cannot ignore the changes in relationships with others, changes in self-image and life philosophy in general that have been taking place since the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is known that in the case of successful coping with stress, basic beliefs are restored, but only up to a certain level of "pre-traumatic" beliefs, at which the person is aware of his/her vulnerability. The person's picture of the world in this case can

be phrased roughly as follows: "The world is benevolent and fair to me. I have the right to choose. But this is not always the case" [17, c. 52].

This assumption, in our opinion, is confirmed by the results of the analysis of the relationship between the degree of expression of basic personal beliefs and psycho-emotional states: students, who believe in the kindness of people and benevolence of the world, in its justice and controllability, and are also convinced in the value of their own self, did not experience states of depression, exhaustion, loneliness, nervousness and discontent due to coronavirus during the last month. Our findings overlap those on the influence of belief in the justice of the world on positive emotions [33].

And, as the study showed, the patterns of relationship of fear and other negative emotional states with the expression degree of basic beliefs, obtained for the entire sample, were reflected in both the Russian and Kazakhstan samples separately. However, the obtained regularities have their own specifics depending on the gender. The revealed specificity of differences between young women and young men in the relationship between fear of coronavirus and basic beliefs suggests that gender differences in this case were more significant than ethnocultural differences.

The study found a high level of stress resistance is accompanied by the expression of basic personal beliefs in *the benevolence*, *the meaningfulness of the world*, *and the self-worth*, confirming a close relationship of psychological resources. This means that these psychological resources, which can be classified as both value-semantic resources and self-regulation resources [12], reduce the vulnerability of Russian and Kazakhstan students in an uncertain pandemic situation and determine the nature of their decisions in coping with fear of coronavirus disease and negative psycho-emotional states.

Conclusions

The conducted research of stress resistance and basic beliefs, as the main psychological resources of the personality for coping with fear and other negative psycho-emotional states associated with COVID-19, among students in Russia and Kazakhstan, allows us to draw the following conclusions.

1. The majority of both Russian and Kazakhstan students have moderate levels of COVID-19 fear. Young women, regardless of their country of residence, experience higher levels of COVID-19 fear than young men. Among Russian students, as compared to Kazakhstan students, there are more of those who have experienced negative psycho-emotional states such as depression, exhaustion, loneliness, nervousness and discontent during the last month because of coronavirus. At the same time, the proportion of young women experiencing negative psycho-emotional states is also significantly higher compared to the proportion of young men, both in Russia and Kazakhstan.

2. Kazakhstan students, compared with Russian ones, have a higher expression level of such psychological resources as stress resistance and basic beliefs in the *Benevolence, Goodness of the World*, and *Meaningfulness, Justice of the World*, which, in our view, can be explained by the features of Kazakh culture formed in the conditions of nomadic lifestyle, based on principles of mutual support and mutual help, trust and openness.

3. A high level of resistance to stressful events is accompanied by lower rates of COVID-19 fear and the absence of negative psycho-emotional states associated with it, regardless of the country of residence and gender, which indicates the universality of the psychological resource as a buffer mitigating the traumatic impact of the pandemic situation.

4. Students with a high level of basic belief in the benevolence of the world around them, regardless of the country of residence, were found to have a high level of fear of coronavirus disease, which was at variance with our findings obtained in the study in the first wave of COVID-19 incidence. The resolution of this contradiction requires further research, taking into account the influence of third factors, e.g., age; experience of illness of one's own, relatives, acquaintances; the level of medical education, etc. Students who were convinced not only of the benevolence of the world around them, but also of its justice and controllability, as well as of the value of their own Self, did not experience states of depression, exhaustion, loneliness, nervousness and discontent because of coronavirus during the last month, which generally indicates the resource potential of the basic personal beliefs.

5. High levels of stress resistance were associated with the expression of basic personal beliefs in *the benevolence, meaningfulness of the world*, *and self-worth*, which together act as a resource potential of the personality for coping with fear and negative emotionality brought on by the stressor exposure to COVID-19.

Research limitations. Using the Qualtrics online survey platform does not allow to form random samples aligned, for example, by size, gender and age. In addition, students from North Kazakhstan (Kostanai) participated in the study, which has certain limitations in extrapolating the results of the study to all Kazakhstan students.

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