

HARDENING IN PSYCHOLOGY AS A FACTOR IN THE FORMATION OF PERSONAL STRESS RESILIENCE

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Abstract

The article examines the phenomenon of hardening from a psychological perspective as a systemic process of forming stress resilience and adaptive resources of personality. A theoretical analysis of the concepts of “hardening,” “stress resilience,” and “psychological resilience” is conducted based on classical and contemporary psychological theories [3; 6; 8]. The main psychological mechanisms of the influence of hardening factors are identified. The results of an empirical study aimed at identifying the relationship between the level of psychological hardening and indicators of stress resilience, anxiety, and self-regulation are presented. The obtained data confirm the significant role of hardening in the prevention of psycho-emotional disorders and in the development of adaptive behavior.

Keywords: Hardening, stress resilience, psychological adaptation, resilience, anxiety, self-regulation, empirical research.

Introduction

In the context of globalization, the acceleration of the pace of life, and the growth of social uncertainty, the problem of maintaining mental health has become particularly relevant [8]. Modern individuals constantly face informational, emotional, and social overloads, which often lead to increased anxiety, emotional burnout, and maladaptation [2; 7].

In this regard, interest in factors contributing to the formation of personal resistance to stress has increased. One such factor is hardening, traditionally studied in physiology and medicine, but possessing significant psychological potential [6]. In psychological science, hardening is considered as a process of forming stable adaptive mechanisms through systematic exposure to moderate stressors [3].

Theoretical Foundations of the Study of Hardening in Psychology

1. The Concept of Hardening

In a broad sense, hardening is defined as a purposeful and systematic exposure to environmental factors that contribute to increasing the resistance of the organism and psyche to adverse conditions [1]. In psychology, this phenomenon is interpreted as a process of developing an individual’s ability to effectively cope with stressful situations without significant psycho-emotional losses [4].



From the standpoint of H. Selye's stress theory, hardening correlates with the concept of **eustress**, which stimulates adaptation and development, in contrast to **distress**, which leads to the depletion of the body's resources [6].

2. Hardening and Psychological Adaptation

Psychological adaptation is a dynamic process of personality adjustment to environmental conditions [8]. Hardening contributes to:

- the expansion of adaptive potential;
- a decrease in sensitivity to stressors;
- the formation of stable coping strategies [8];
- the development of positive self-esteem and a sense of control over the situation [4].

Psychological Mechanisms of Hardening

1. Emotional-Regulatory Mechanism

Regular exposure to moderate stress factors promotes the development of the ability to manage emotional reactions, reducing impulsivity and emotional lability [7].

2. Cognitive Mechanism

Hardening contributes to the formation of a rational assessment of stressful situations, a reduction in catastrophizing, and the development of positive cognitive attitudes [8].

3. Motivational-Volitional Mechanism

The hardening process develops such personality traits as perseverance, self-discipline, responsibility, and readiness to overcome difficulties [4; 5].

Hardening as a Factor in Personal Stress Resilience

Stress resilience is defined as an individual's ability to maintain effective functioning and psychological balance under stress [2]. Studies show that individuals with a high level of psychological hardening demonstrate:

- a lower level of anxiety [7];
- a high level of self-regulation [5];
- pronounced psychological resilience [8];
- resistance to frustration [3].

Empirical Study

1. Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify the relationship between the level of psychological hardening and indicators of personal stress resilience.

Objectives of the study:

1. To determine the level of psychological hardening of the participants.
2. To assess the level of anxiety and stress resilience.
3. To analyze the correlations between the studied indicators.



2. Sample Characteristics

The study involved **120 respondents** aged **18 to 35 years** (60 men and 60 women). All participants were students and young professionals living in an urban environment.

3. Research Methods

The following psychodiagnostic methods were used:

1. Holmes–Rahe Stress Scale [2].
2. Spielberger–Hanin State-Trait Anxiety Inventory [7].
3. Morosanova’s Self-Regulation of Behavior Questionnaire [5].
4. Author’s questionnaire “Level of Psychological Hardening.”

Pearson’s correlation analysis and Student’s *t*-test were used for statistical data processing.

4. Research Results

The analysis showed that participants with a high level of psychological hardening demonstrated:

- a statistically significant decrease in trait anxiety ($p < 0.01$);
- a high level of behavioral self-regulation ($p < 0.05$);
- pronounced stress resilience.

Correlation analysis revealed:

- a negative relationship between hardening and anxiety ($r = -0.62$);
- a positive relationship between hardening and self-regulation ($r = 0.58$);
- a positive relationship between hardening and stress resilience ($r = 0.65$).

5. Discussion of Results

The results confirm the hypothesis that psychological hardening is a significant factor in the formation of personal stress resilience. Regular exposure to moderate stressors enhances adaptive mechanisms and reduces the risk of psycho-emotional disorders, which is consistent with previous studies [3; 6; 8].

Practical Significance

The findings can be applied in psychological counseling, educational psychology, stress management programs, professional training for extreme occupations, and psycho-preventive work with youth [2; 5].

Conclusion

Hardening in psychology is an important resource for the formation of stress resilience and psychological adaptation of personality. Both theoretical and empirical analyses show that systematic psychological hardening contributes to reduced anxiety, improved self-regulation, and increased resistance to stress, confirming its preventive and developmental potential [4; 6; 8].



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