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Personality predictors of self-handicapping as a behavioral manifestation of the individual's self-efficacy deficit

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In line with a more liberal approach (Snyder & Smith, 1982) to the conceptualization of self-handicapping, empirical data were collected that characterize the personality predictors of self-handicapping as a manifestation of the individual's self-efficacy deficit, reflected in coping behavior, rather than as a self-esteem safeguarding strategy. A group of 120 undergraduates took part in the study. Using correlational, factor, and multiple regression analyses, we found that the major personality predictors of self-handicapping are (1) proneness to the emotion-focused reactive coping, when confronted with problems in the course of goal-striving, (2) a low level of the conditions of self-evolution as a component of "Dispositional characteristics of self-evolution" (Kusikova, 2012), and (3) a low level of conscientiousness as a broad personality trait. No significant correlations of self-handicapping with self-esteem were found. The specific perspective in this study is determined by the conceptualization of self-handicapping as a proactive disengagement emotion-focused coping strategy, indicative of the individual's self-efficacy deficit

Keywords: self-handicapping, proactive coping strategy, self-efficacy deficit, personality predictors

People frequently have doubts about their competence, and then create obstacles to which they can attribute possible failure. This creation of obstacles is called self-handicapping, a concept introduced by Berglas and Jones (1978) who suggested it to reflect the concern of the individual about self-esteem in situations of experiencing uncertainty about one's competence. Self-handicapping was first seen as a strategic means to protect or reinforce self-esteem by ascribing the likely causes of failure to such outer factors. With the creation of outer factors to which failure can be attributed, the source of failure is externalized. In case of eventual success, this success is internalized (attributed to self). There is an enormous amount of literature supporting the idea of self-handicapping as an externalization strategy (e.g., Hirt, McCrea, & Boris, 2003; Elliot, Cury, Fryer, & Huguet, 2006).

There is also a vast amount of literature on the precursors and consequences of self-handicapping as a self-esteem protecting strategy and on what it actually involves (see, for example, Higgins, Snyder, & Berglas, 1990). From the perspective of safeguarding one's self-esteem the following personality predictors of self-handicapping have been identified: proneness to hypochondria (Smith, Snyder, & Perkins, 1983), social anxiety or shyness (Snyder, Smith, Augelli, & Ingram, 1985), public self-consciousness and impression management (Kolditz & Arkin, 1982), Big Five Conscientiousness and Neuroticism (Ross, Canada, & Rausch, 2002; Bobo, Whitaker, & Strunk, 2013), and self-control (Uysal & Knee, 2012). Quite a few of these studies made use of the Self-Handicapping Scale (Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982), described as "an individual difference measure of the tendency to engage in behaviors that strategically protect self-esteem" (Strube, 1986).

In this study we focus on personality predictors of self-handicapping, and we interpret self-handicapping as a behavioral manifestation of a lack of self-efficacy; this view on self-handicapping is reflected most clearly in coping behavior. The study of self-handicapping as a coping strategy implies considering self-handicapping as a means of avoiding a situation of stress. Because of the lack of psychological resources to deal effectively with the problems, self-handicapping might impede successful performance, and cause negative feelings, typical of the so-called emotion-focused coping strategy (as opposed to the problem-focused coping, see Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the logic of this approach self-handicapping is seen as a form of disengagement from the situation of stress, as Zuckerman, Kieffer, and Knee (1998) put it.

While the major function of self-handicapping has been seen as the protection of self-esteem, Higgins et al. (1990), pointed out that the self-esteem protection function does not fully explain the observed detrimental effects of self-handicapping: it lowers motivation, psychological well-being, and satisfaction from the ability to achieve success (Abaci & Akin, 2011). As Crocker and Park (2004) point out, the pursuit of self-esteem has "short- and long-term costs". Studies of consequences and costs of self-handicapping suggest that self-handicapping rather reflects the individually perceived inability to succeed in solving significant life problems than one's efforts of protecting self-esteem (Zuckerman et al., 1998; Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005).

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Table 1. Likely personality predictors and consequences of self-handicapping (as a proactive coping strategy)

	CONSEQUENCES		
PERSONALITY PREDICTORS	*For the level of the affective situational appraisal*	*For the level of the cognitive appraisal of one's coping resources*	*For the operational (decision making) level*
Low level of striving to self-evolution	Fear of failure	Low self-efficacy belief	Choice of emotion-focused and avoidance strategies of reactive coping
Low level of conscientiousness and high level of neuroticism	Failure avoidance orientation	Low level of the mental health continuum	Choice of self-handicapping as a proactive coping strategy

Wrosch, Miller, Scheier, and De Pontet (2007) explicitly stress that the acts of self-handicapping signal "giving up unattainable goals" which implies the possibility of interpreting this behavior in the domain of the individual's goal-striving efforts and of other personality dispositions. Those personality characteristics would probably refer to a level of conscientiousness and of a striving to self-development or self-evolution.

The practical significance of an adequate conceptualization of self-handicapping and the appropriate identification of its personality predictors are evident. An issue is expressed in the distinction between short-term and long-term effects of self-handicapping. Although self-handicapping has been found to indeed protect and enhance self-esteem (Feick & Rhodewalt, 1997; McCrea & Hirt, 2001), in the long run it can cause serious damage, often but not only, for example, through repeated substance use: it can also have serious effects on the level of well-being as a factor that can prevent achieving success, and even on broad dispositional traits (Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005; cf., Crocker & Park, 2004; Zuckerman et al., 1998).

The primary interest of the present study is to investigate personality predictors of self-handicapping associated with (a) the individually perceived self-efficacy deficit, claimed to be reflected in coping inadequacy, and (b) the factors, likely to reveal the etiology of self-handicapping and related, most probably, to a low level of self-efficacy belief, conscientiousness, and dispositional strive to self-evolution. Self-handicapping is thus seen both as a behavioral manifestation of a proactive disengagement emotion-focused coping strategy and of the individual's self-efficacy deficit. Another goal of this research is to find empirical confirmation that self-handicapping, when becoming habitual, is a potential threat to mental-health and to well-being.

In formulating the above goals we took into account the findings by Carver and Connor-Smith (2010) that, in the face of problems arising in goal-striving situations, so-called "specific personality facets account for twice the variance in predicting well-being than broad traits" (p. 695). We aim to provide further empirical evidence that a coping viewpoint on self-handicapping is a fruitful perspective for its scientific investigation.

In Nosenko. Arshava, and Nosenko (2014), we concluded that there is quite a number of concepts similar in status to self-handicapping, and located between broad dispositional personality traits and narrower individual styles in which one "thinks, feels, and acts". Such concepts have been referred to as dynamic contextualized traits (Boyle, Matthews, & Saklofske, 2008), and they include, for example, openness to experience versus rigidity (indicative of how one thinks), emotional intelligence (characteristic of how one feels), belief in self- efficacy and self-handicapping (both indicative of how one acts). Moreover, from own observations, and with reference to studies such as Garcia and Pintrich (1993), we found that among the students who frequently resorted to self-handicapping, the majority had low GPA. This can be regarded as an implicit confirmation that self-handicapping is a disengagement coping strategy and can signal the lack of conscientiousness, on the one side, and moral immaturity, on the other.

Predictions in the present study

In accordance with the goals mentioned above, and with the adoption of self-handicapping as a disengagement coping strategy, indicative of the individual's self-efficacy deficit, the following empirical hypotheses were tested.

(1) The tendency to resort to self-handicapping, if viewed as a proactive coping strategy of the avoidance type, which signals that the individual is not sure of the success of the anticipated significant activity, is likely to be predicted by a low level of conscientiousness (as a broad dispositional trait), and by a low level of the tendency to the development of self.

(2) Proneness to self-handicapping is likely to reflect the tendency of the individual to resort to emotion-focused avoidance strategies of reactive coping, when confronted with problems, rather than to the problem-focused one.

(3) The emotional significance of the failure avoidance orientation for the individual as a major symptom of self-handicapping is likely to cause a negative correlation of self-handicapping with the individual's self-efficacy belief. For the same reason, individuals, who frequently resort to self-handicapping, are likely to experience a low level of mental health.

Table 1 summarizes the hypothesis in the form of a two by three table, in which the two rows represent the personality predictors, and the three columns represent the possible consequences of self-handicapping.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 120 undergraduate students (75 females, 45 males; mean age 20.5 years, ranging from 18 to 23 years), recruited at the Dnipropetrovsk National University. Extra credit was offered as incentive to volunteer.

Measures

Seven measures were used to generate data for the different features of the study. They comprised three personality measures (Big Five, self-evolution, self-efficacy), three coping strategy measures (self-handicapping, CISS, PCI), and a measure of the likely consequences of self-handicapping (mental health).

NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI). The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992; adapted by Khromov, 2000) is a 60-item inventory to measure the Big Five personality domain factors Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. The NEO-FFI has strong psychometric properties. Six-year test-retest reliability has ranges from .63 to .82. For the NEO-FFI, the internal consistencies were .79 (Neuroticism), 79 (Extraversion), .68 (Openness to experience), .75 (Agreeableness), and .83 (Conscientiousness). For the adapted version, the alphas were .63 (N),.76 (E), .75 (O), .79 (A), and .73 (C).

Dispositional Characteristics of Self-Evolution. To assess an individual's awareness of oneself as an agent of self-evolution, we used a new Ukranian inventory - the "Dispositional Characteristics of Personality Self-Evolution" (Kusikova, 2012). The Inventory consists of 30 statements to be rated on a five-point Likert scale, running from "1" (not like me at all) to "5" (very much like me). Examples of items are "I believe in my potential abilities and strive to self-actualization", "I enjoy doing things that require maximum commitment and efforts", and "In my life I am guided by the ideals of truthfulness, goodness, and beauty". The Inventory has three scales. The first scale, Need of Self-Evolution, was described by Kusikova (2012) as the awareness of the individual of the necessity of self-growth, openness to changes, interest in the events of the surrounding world, and interest in one's own inner world. The second scale, Conditions of Self-Evolution, was defined in terms of autonomy, positive self-perception, strength and maturity of the self-image, awareness of one's goals, and active life strategies. The third scale, Mechanisms (functional means) of Self-Evolution, was defined in terms of self-comprehension (strive to authenticity), self-reflection (self-analysis), awareness of the discrepancies between the real and the ideal self, and sensitivity to the feedback from other people. The internal consistency of the Inventory was reported to be .70.

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE). The General Self-Efficacy Scale is a 10-item scale designed to assess optimistic self-beliefs to cope with a variety of difficult demands in life. The scale was originally developed in German by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) and adapted to Russian by Schwarzer, Jerusalem, and Romek (1996). During an adaptation study, a single general factor was confirmed and an internal consistency of .85 was reported.

Self-Handicapping Scale. The Self-Handicapping Scale (Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982; adapted by D. Nosenko) comprises 25 statements aimed at assessing the proclivity to display self-handicapping behavior. For each statement subjects were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a six-point scale. Large group testing sessions indicated that the scale exhibited acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .79) and test-retest reliability (r = .74, after one month) (Rhodewalt 1990). The predictive validity of the scale was confirmed in a number of studies (e.g., Strube, 1986; Rhodewalt, 1990; 1994). The Ukrainian adapted version had a Cronbach alpha internal consistency of .65 and a test-rest reliability after 8 weeks of .72.

Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS). The CISS was used to measure five coping strategies, namely Task-oriented, Emotion-oriented, Avoidance strategy, Distraction, and Social diversion (Endler & Parker, 1990a, 1990b). We used an adapted version of the inventory (Krukova, 2001). The inventory includes 46 items to which subjects responded on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "1" (strongly disagree) to "7" (strongly agree). The stem questions request that individuals rate how much they engage in each activity when they encounter difficult, stressful, or upsetting situations. Sample items include "Think about how I solved similar problems" (task-oriented coping), "Blame myself for not knowing what to do" (emotion-oriented coping), and "Watch TV; call a friend" (avoidance-oriented coping). Reliability and validity estimates for the adapted version of the CISS provide support for internal consistency of all the scales. Based on the empirical data, collected by Krukova in the course of the adaptation of the CISS, the Cronbach's alpha was .88 for the whole inventory, .85 for Problem-oriented coping, .88 for Emotion–oriented coping, and .81 for Avoidance.

Proactive Coping Inventory (PCI). The PCI consists of six subscales and 55 items (Greenglass, Schwartzer, & Taubert, 1999). The scale was adapted to Russian by Starchenkova (2009). The six subscales of both the original and the adapted versions of the PCI are: The Proactive coping scale, the Reflective coping scale, Strategic planning, Preventive coping, Instrumental support seeking, and Emotional support seeking. The subjects were asked to evaluate the degree of agreement with the suggested statements on a 4-point scale, running from "1" (totally disagree) to "4"(totally agree). It may be noted that in case of shortage of time, The Proactive coping scale can be used as the single independent measure. It has the highest internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha of .85.

Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF). MHC-SF, designed by Keyes (2009; adapted to Ukrainian by Nosenko & Chetveryk-Burchak), is composed of 14 items. It provides measures of subjective, psychological, and social well-being. The short form has shown good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha is .80) and discriminatory validity. Test-re-test reliability estimates range from .57 to .82 for the total scale (Keyes, 2007). The three factor structure of the short form - subjective, psychological, and social well-being – has been confirmed in American representative samples (Keyes, 2005; 2009).

Table 2. Correlations of self-handicapping with Big Five traits and self-evolution

	Big Five factors					Self-evolution (SE) facets			
Variables	O	C	E	A	N	Overall disposition to SE	Need of SE	Conditions of SE	Mechanisms of SE
Self-handicapping	-.12	-.24**	-.22*	-.04	.29**	-.20**	-.07	-.31**	.02

Note: * p < .05, ** p < .01; O = Openness to new experience, C = Conscientiousness, E = Extraversion, A = Agreeableness, N = Neuroticism

Table 3. Correlations of self-handicapping with preferred coping strategies and the appraisal of one's self-efficacy

	Preferred coping strategies and appraisal of self-efficacy					
Variables	Emotion-focused	Avoidance	Problem-focused	Distraction	Social Diversion	Belief in Self-Efficacy
Self-Handicapping	.41**	.20*	-.16	.17	.03	-.25**

Note: * p < .05, ** p < .01

Procedure

The procedure was reviewed and approved by Scientific and Educational Board of the Faculty of Psychology of Dnipropetrovsk National University. Students were scheduled for testing after classes (between 1 pm - 3:30 pm). They were provided with brief explanations of the research objectives, and those who agreed to participate were asked to complete the questionnaires. First they completed the personality measures, the NEO-FFI and the Self-Evolution inventory. Next they were asked to fill out the three inventories for measuring their preferred coping strategies, the CISS, the PCI, and the Self-Handicapping Scale. Finally, the expected consequences of proneness to self-handicapping was assessed with the MHC-SF, indicative of the three aspects of well-being: psychological, social, and subjective.

Data analysis

Correlational analysis was applied to study the direction and strength of the hypothesized correlations between self-handicapping, on the one hand, and its likely personality predictors and consequences, on the other hand. Those personality predictors included the preferred reactive and proactive coping strategies and the self-efficacy beliefs, while the likely long-term consequences were identified in terms of the individuals' mental health continuum level.

Principal Components Analysis (followed by varimax rotation) was performed on all of the categorical variables chosen for this research, in order to summarize the patterns of correlations among those variables, and especially to find out whether self-handicapping perhaps relates in distinctive ways to the different sets of variables.

Multiple regression analysis was chosen to single out the hierarchy of the most probable personality predictors and consequences, indicative of the individual's proneness to self-handicapping or the likelihood of avoiding it.

RESULTS

Correlations

Table 2 presents the results of the empirical assessment of the statistically significant correlations between self-handicapping and the two classes of its hypothetical personality predictors (broad personality traits and dispositional characteristics of self-evolution).

The maladaptive role of Self-Handicapping in personality functioning is illustrated by significant positive correlations with Neuroticism (r = .29, p < .01), and significant negative correlations with Conscientiousness (r = -.24, p < .01) and Extraversion (r = -.22, p < .05). The correlations between Self-Handicapping and Neuroticism and Conscientiousness confirm findings by other investigators (e.g., Ross et al., 2002). Self-Handicapping was also found to correlate negatively with the (overall) Dispositions to Self-Evolution (r = - .20, p < .05) and with Conditions of Self-Evolution (r = -.31, p < .01). The latter correlation is of interest because the Conditions of Self-Evolution facet implies maturity of self-image, autonomy, self-identity, internality, clearly comprehended life goals, and striving to self-actualization (Kusikova, 2012).

Table 3 gives the correlations between Self-Handicapping and coping strategies. Self-Handicapping turned out to have significant negative correlations with Belief in Self-Efficacy (r = -.25, p < .01). Moreover, Self-Handicapping has positive correlations with Emotion-focused strategies (r = .41, p < .01) and Avoidance strategies of reactive coping (r = .20, p < .05).

One more noteworthy result was a negative correlation between Self-Handicapping and the Mental Health Continuum variable (r = -.23, p < .01). This correlation indicates the negative impact of self-handicapping on psychological, subjective, and social well-being. The Mental Health Continuum inventory includes items indicative of the above mentioned three components of well-being.

Table 4. Principal Components Analysis with varimax rotation

Measures	Factors I	II	III
Self-Handicapping	**-.37**	-.08	**.37**
NEO-FFI			
Extraversion	.21	**.63**	.01
Agreeableness	.27	**.57**	.10
Conscientiousness	.22	**.78**	-.03
Neuroticism	**-.41**	-.18	.27
Openness to experience	.14	**.73**	.04
GSE Self-Efficacy	**.71**	.17	-.20
Disposition to Self-Evolution	**.53**	**.49**	-.08
Needs of Self-Evolution	.21	**.58**	-.10
Conditions of Self-Evolution	**.70**	**.32**	-.12
Mechanisms of Self-Evolution	.29	.28	**.49**
CISS			
Problem-focused coping	**.69**	.10	.09
Emotion-focused coping	**-.46**	-.08	**.54**
Avoidance coping	.01	-.15	**.79**
Avoidance-Distraction	-.09	-.18	**.70**
Avoidance-Social diversion	-.14	.06	**.64**
PCI			
Proactive coping strategy	**.64**	.28	-.11
Reflexive coping strategy	**.68**	.23	.11
Strategic coping strategy	**.69**	.26	-.05
Preventive coping strategy	**.58**	.15	.13
Seeking instrumental support	.11	.18	**.50**
Seeking emotional support	.13	.19	**.42**
Mental Health Continuum	**.50**	**.43**	-.06

Principal Components Analysis

The Principle Components Analysis gave seven eigenvalues above 1, namely 6.52, 3.36, 2.41, 2.19, 1.79, 1.50, 1.08. This would indicate two to four factors. We checked different solutions, and the solution with three factors gave some differentiation in the role of Self-Handicapping in relation to other scale-variables. Therefore, the first three were accepted for further use, and rotated according to varimax; they together explained 49.2 % of the total variance. The results of the PCA are presented in Table 4.

Factor 1, called "The deliberate strive to self-evolution and general self-efficacy", explained 20.1 % of the variance. Its meaning is defined by positive loadings of Self-Efficacy, Conditions of Self-Evolution, Disposition to Self-Evolution, with all the engagement coping strategies, with Mental Health, and with negative loadings of Self-Handicapping, Emotion-focused coping, and Neuroticism.

Factor 2, explaining 16.1 % of the variance, mainly describes "Dispositional resources", including four Big Five factors and dispositional characteristics of Self-Evolution.

Factor 3, called "The lack of coping resources" explains 13.0 % of the variance. It includes three strategies of the reactive form of coping: the Emotion-focused, Avoidance, and its two varieties Distraction and Social diversion, as well as two strategies of proactive coping: Seeking emotional support and Seeking instrumental support.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The results of multiple regression analysis are summarized in Table 5. We formed three models with different sets of predictors of proneness to self-handicapping. The first one included the twelve variables defining Factor 1 (all in boldface in Table 4). The second model included the eight variables defining Factor 3. The third model included all the variables chosen for this research.

Model 1 explained 20.2 % of the total variance. It was significant at F=14.79, $p < .01$. It included two predictor variables expressing likelihood of proneness to Self-Handicapping, a positive predictor - Emotion-focused coping (β = .34, $p < .01$) and a negative predictor - Conditions of Self-Evolution (β =-.20, $p < .05$).

Model 2 explained 16.5 % of total variance and includes one significant predictor of Self-Handicapping, namely the Emotion-focused coping (β =.41, $p < .01$). It was significant at F=23.38 ($p < .01$).

Model 3 explained 21.5 % of total variance and includes two significant predictors of Self-Handicapping, namely the tendency to resort to the Emotion-focused coping strategy (β = .40, $p < .01$) and Conscientiousness (β = -.22, $p < .05$) with which Self-Handicapping has a negative correlation. This model was significant at F=16.06 ($p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

This study focused on personality predictors of self-handicapping, including both broad personality factors and more specific factors as in typical strategies of avoidance or coping. We used correlational analyses, factor analysis, and multiple regression analyses. The outcomes of the analyses allowed us to identify a multi-aspect picture of personality predicting self-handicapping.

More specifically, the first question was whether the self-handicapping tendency could be explained by dispositional personality factors such as conscientiousness and self-evolution. This was indeed the case. A low level of conscientiousness relates to proneness to self-handicapping. Moreover, self-handicapping was also related to being neurotic and introverted. Proneness to self-handicapping was also found to relate negatively with self-evolution, in particular with the Conditions of Self-evolution, thus emphasizing a low level of self-actualization. The second question was whether proneness to self-handicapping is related to the tendency of the individual to resort to emotion-focused avoidance strategies. This was confirmed with a positive correlation (Table 3). In addition, self-handicapping was related to the individual's appraisal of his/her coping resources in terms of general efficacy, which finding confirms the third expectation.

The results of the factor-analysis allow for a differentiation in the manner in which self-handicapping relates to the dispositional variables, the other coping variables, and mental health. On the one hand, the factor "Deliberate striving to self-evolution and self-efficacy" emphasizes that self-efficacy combines well with active, problem-solving forms of coping, as opposed to emotionality related variables (neuroticism and emotion-focused coping) and self-handicapping. The factor "Lack of coping resources" describes that people differ in terms of emphasis on emotion and avoidance strategies and support-seeking forms of coping.

Table 5. Summary of the multiple regression analysis for the variables predictive of Self-Handicapping

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*B*	*SE B*	*β*
Emotion-focused coping	.377	.097	.341**	.449	.093	0.407**	.439	.091	.398**
Conditions of Self-Evolution	-.395	.171	-.202*						
Conscientiousness							-.230	.084	-.224*
R^2		.202			.165			.215	
F for change in R^2		14.79**			23.375**			16.055**	

Note: Model 1 includes the variables of Factor 1; Model 2 includes those of Factor 3; Model 3 includes all the variables; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

On the symptomatic level of the analysis of self-handicapping, its most informative personality predictor is the individual's tendency to resort to the emotion-focused coping strategy in dealing with impediments in the goal-striving behavior. The fact, that the emotion-focused strategy was a significant predictor of proneness to self-handicapping in all three models of the multiple regression analysis, supports the suggestion that proneness to self-handicapping is caused, first and foremost, by the negative emotions experienced by the individual who is not sure of his or her coping resources. Self-handicapping can be interpreted as the projection of the emotion-focused reactive coping strategy to the situations of the anticipated failure.

On the etiological level of the analysis of proneness to self-handicapping, the personality predictors of the phenomenon are associated with a low level of the belief in self efficacy, which stimulates the failure-avoidance type of behavioral motivation.

On the typological level of the analysis of self-handicapping, its predictors include the broad personality trait of conscientiousness, with which proneness to self-handicapping has significant negative correlations, and a low level of Conditions of Self-Evolution, one of the key components of the dispositional orientation to self-evolution.

The empirical results allow to conclude that self-handicapping can be interpreted as an overt multi-aspect manifestation of the individual's self-efficacy inadequacy. The data in this paper not only confirmed an earlier claim of other authors, referred to in the introduction, that acts of self-handicapping signal "giving up unattainable goals". It also provided additional information in favor of the categorization of self-handicapping as a form of coping behavior which had been debatable until recently.

The empirical finding that in the first and the third model of the regression analyses self-handicapping is predicted by conscientiousness and conditions of self-evolution, alongside the emotion-focused coping strategy, leaves no doubt that self-handicapping as a disengagement coping strategy. Though both personality characteristics are etiologically different –conscientiousness is a broad dispositional trait while "conditions of self-evolution" is formed mainly thanks to the deliberate efforts of the individuals–, the two concepts appeared to be functionally similar in their role as factors that prevent the formation of proneness to self-handicapping. The finding that the Conditions of Self-Evolution variable has more powerful negative correlations with self-handicapping than Conscientiousness suggests that self-handicapping is etiologically related to coping behavior that requires deliberate efforts.

The results of the factor analysis and of the correlational analyses complement the finding obtained through the regression analysis. They showed that self-handicapping has negative correlations with the individual's belief in self-efficacy. This quite convincingly confirms the hypothesis that proneness to self-handicapping is a characteristic feature of the individually experienced self-efficacy deficit in situations calling for coping responses.

The finding that the tendency to resort to self-handicapping also correlates negatively with the mental health (reflecting psychological, social, and subjective well-being), characterizes self-handicapping as an informative and specific dynamic personality facet for diagnosing the psychological resources of effective personality functioning.

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