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PERSONAL FACTORS OF RISK BEHAVIOR OF MODERN YOUTH

The paper deals with the influence of personal factors on manifestations of risk behavior in young people. Risk behavior is usually associated with personality challenge and danger. Objective assessment of risk and its degree in the performance of appropriate tasks, the manifestation of predisposition to risk behavior is extremely important for the safety of the personality in a variety of life situations. This is especially true for young people, because their risk appetite arises through the search for adventures, interesting events, intense emotions and, accordingly, the internal readiness to take risks at different levels (physical, social, legal) for acquiring experience through the realization of risk actions. The article describes emotional, cognitive and volitional components in the structure of risk behavior. Based on the results of the conducted empirical research (comparative and correlation analysis), the following personal factors contributing to the formation of risk behavior of modern youth have been found: masculinity, sociability, reactive aggression, self-confidence and shyness. According to the results of the study, students have a low level of self-control, which can provoke the emergence of risk actions, because it involves the inability to resist circumstances, the lack of trends of searching for causes of actions and results in themselves.

Keywords: *risk, risk appetite, risk behavior, predisposition to risk, readiness for risk, need for feelings, self-control.*

Introduction

Modern society is increasingly facing the manifestations of risk behavior among young people. Risk actions can manifest themselves in various forms: from physical injury, dangerous sexual behavior, unhealthy eating behavior, to substance abuse and anti-social behavior.

The formation of risk behavior in young people is significant both for the society as a whole and for every person in particular. Occasionally, risk behavior may be the cause of personal tragedies, endanger health and well-being of an individual, influence his/her harmonious development, and at the state level, its consequences may be a serious social and moral hazard.

Risk behavior is usually associated with personality challenge and danger. Objective assessment of the risk and degree of risk in the performance of appropriate tasks, the manifestation of predisposition to risk behavior is extremely important for the safety of the individual in a variety of life situations.

The search for adventures, interesting events, intense experiences and, accordingly, internal readiness to take risks of various levels (physical, social, legal) for acquiring experience through the implementation of risky actions acts as a source of risk behavior, especially in young people [6].

For young people, the internal “fearlessness” in the implementation of the strategy of risk behavior is based on peculiarities of behavior, where “the stake is very high, and the result is unpredictable” [4]. This is an internal motivation to implement a risk strategy for young people.

The reasons for risk behavior involve the possibility of freedom of choice, improper assessment of a situation associated with the lack of time or information, pressure, strengthening one’s own credibility, lack of experience and responsibility for consequences [1].

The influence of personal and socio-psychological factors of risk behavior should be emphasized, among which there are such qualities as self-confidence, accentuatedness of character traits, emotional experience of frustration, stress, infantilism, self-centeredness, irresponsibility, has been statistically proved. However, this range of characteristics can be supplemented in accordance with objective and subjective factors of social and personal level.

A theoretical review of domestic and foreign studies shows that risk behavior is considered in the context of self-destruction problems, danger to life and health, as well as a maladaptation model of behavior in young people. Only a small number of studies consider risk behavior as a way of adapting to the environment, a challenge, a means of self-knowledge and self-identity.

Regarding peculiarities of risk behavior in youth, it is necessary to take into account the scientific achievements of S. Bogomolov, V. Vyatkina, R. Granovsky, A. Kalyuzhnyi, T. Kornilova, T. Chudinova, where the emphasis is put on important elements of the person's risk proneness – the need for risk, the search for impressions, new experience, the desire for acute feelings, the desire for change, overcoming everyday life, routine, the desire to go beyond, etc. [6].

R. Poldrack's latest research on risk behavior proves that it is related to the activity of the mesophytic system of dopamine, which controls all juvenile dependencies. Since dopamine plays a significant role in the process of inducing a search for rewards, a large number of error messages can lead to an increase of the need for a positive result, and as a consequence, to risky behavior.

In existential psychology, there are quite different approaches to the treatment of risk behavior. So, the main features of such a behavior are the problem of freedom and responsibility, the problem of choice, as well as the authenticity and meaning of life.

V. Frankl compared risk individual behavior with the behavior of an addict: to satisfy the need a person requires emotional upheaval that creates a stronger sense of thirst and he/she every time tends to increase the dose. In his view, risk behavior is a state of conditional satisfaction, a situation of artificial meaning as an end in itself [12].

In order to outline the scope of research interests concerning the psychological phenomenon of risk behavior and focus on a range of characteristics that are key to the formation of risk actions, we turn to the structure of risk proneness from the position of the continuum-hierarchical structure of personality, developed by O. P. Sannikova [9].

In the context of this approach, the personality is a macrosystem, which consists of multi-level subsystems that are endowed with specific characteristics. The main levels of this system are formal-dynamic, content-personal, and socially-imperative.

In the context of this approach, risk proneness manifests itself at a socially imperative level (associated with the decision-making system), at a content-personal (includes responsibility, sense of duty, self-control, that is, defined by personal readiness for risk), at a formal-dynamic (determined by the individual psychological characteristics of temperament) [9].

Therefore, it is important in our research to study the totality of personal traits that satisfy the basic needs of young people to get pleasure, assert themselves and experience passion, obsession and hedonism.

The paper **aims to** investigate personality factors that contribute to the formation of risk behavior and the phenomenon of risk proneness and its relationship with specific personal qualities.

Research Methods

The theoretical study is based on the methods of analysis, synthesis, induction, abstraction, comparison, generalization, systematization of scientific sources in the field of risk behavior in psychology.

Concerning the empirical research, the following psychodiagnostic techniques were applied: Personal Degree of Readiness for Risk Inventory by R. Schubert, Self-Attitude Scale by R. S. Panteleev, Freiburg Personality Inventory, Level of Subjective Control Inventory, as well as Risk Proneness Inventory by A. G. Shmeliyov.

The study involved 100 people (65 girls and 35 boys). Among them there are 50 students of higher education institutions and 50 students of colleges and vocational schools.

Theoretical Study Results

Young age is characterized by clear self-awareness of being an independent person who actively searches for the place in the world and seeks to be self-assured in any way, has a high degree of freedom with limited opportunities and lack of responsibility.

Therefore, the optimal behavior strategy at this age is a risk one, which involves uncertainty, danger, spontaneity, unobservable balance of positive and negative consequences, giving an opportunity to realize a variety of personal needs and achieve the desired goals in the fastest way.

Risk behavior is always associated with danger, life threatening and the threat of loss, but also with the ability to get desirable due to favorable circumstances. Risk behavior is due to the interconnection of a number of factors, among which:

- biological prerequisites;
- age characteristics;
- personal qualities;
- cognitive attitudes and beliefs;
- subjective assessments of risk behavior;
- personal culture, values and norms of a personality;
- social values and norms;
- attitude of media towards risk [5].

It should be noted that risk behavior at a young age can be regarded as a constructive phenomenon and serves as a potential energy for adaptation to adult life, where a young person independently assesses the degree of permissible risk actions and, accordingly, bears the responsibility for the consequences of this choice. Undeniably, risk behavior is an attribute of social adaptation, and a set of risk actions is an attempt of a young person to experiment with his/her own capabilities.

Therefore, a detailed analysis of personal factors contributing to risk behavior of an individual should be conducted in the framework of our research. N. Kogan and M. Wallach, the authors of the Choice-Dilemmas Questionnaire, believe that there are individuals who, regardless of the specifics of the situation, show general risk proneness (Risikobereitschaft), which always gives way to riskier choices [7]. Therefore, we can assert the dominance of the volitional component, the so-called courage, acting as the trigger of risk behavior.

The cognitive component of risk behavior is associated with its understanding and ideas about this phenomenon. Yu. Kozeletsky distinguished the following main types of representations of risk behavior: probabilistic

(events cannot be predicted and they depend on random external factors); heuristic (associated with the interaction of independent variables); deterministic (decision is made on the basis of clearly defined rules).

The emotional component of risk behavior is also worth considering. The main components of the emotionality of risk involve intensification of emotions, range of their experiencing, their degree and strength.

One of the most studied personal characteristics related to risk proneness is the search for strong feelings or the desire for new sensations, which is a result of the desire to escape from everyday life and monotony, as well as the aggravation of adventurousness [5].

Also, emotional characteristics of risk behavior include impulsiveness, but it is more related to the characteristics of temperament, in particular, the balance-imbalance of the individual's nervous system.

Besides, the cognitive component in risk, which is a

risk-prone attitude (the presence of such mental characteristics, which allow a person to perceive, recognize the risk situation, but not to solve it) that is also important.

Another individual variable associated with risk behavior is an optimistic and pessimistic personality orientation. It is proved that safe behavior strategies are peculiar for optimists, and risky ones – for pessimists.

Besides, low adaptability, low self-control and motivation for success are psychological correlates of risk behavior in young people.

Empirical Research Results

Analyzing the results of the empirical study, one can determine the general tendency of low manifestations of risk behavior. The comparison of university and vocational school students show that in both groups the average values are dominant. However, the comparison of those prone to risk shows that vocational school students are more risk prone (Figure 1).

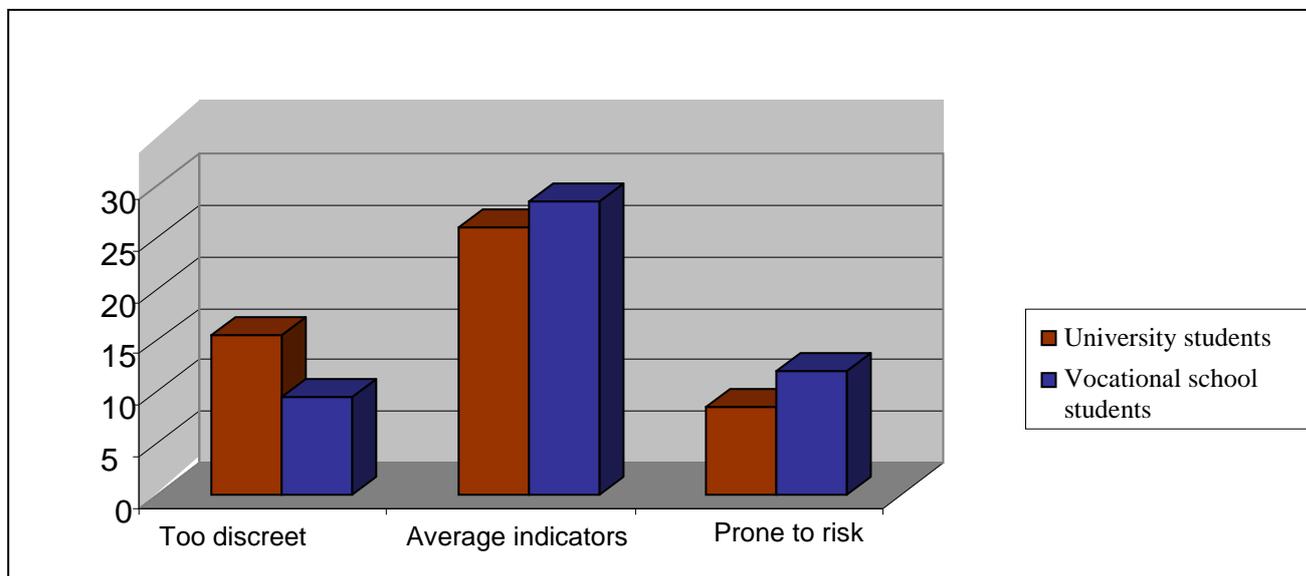


Fig. 1. Indicators of Readiness for Risk

In addition, there are significant differences in risk proneness depending on gender. The quantitative analysis of the empirical findings shows that boys and girls have

an average risk proneness, although boys are more likely to take risks (Figure 2).

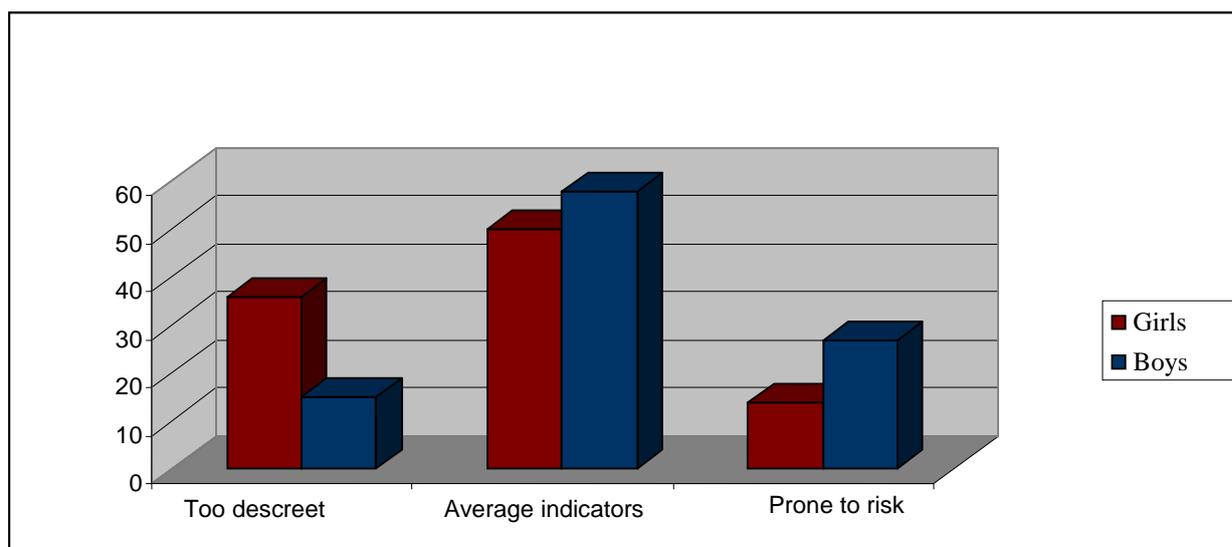


Fig. 2. Risk Readiness Indicators (for Female and Male Students)

According to the results of self-attitude assessment, the highest indicator was observed according to the self-attachment, indicating the rigidity of their self-concept and unwillingness to change because of general positive self-attitude. These experiences are often accompanied by a commitment to an inadequate self-image, which in turn can be a good background for the formation of risk behavior.

High values according to the Internal Conflict Scale are an indicator of the presence of internal conflicts, doubts, possible anxious and depressive conditions in a personality.

Permanent dissatisfaction and internal inconsistency against the background of low self-esteem as well as excessive heart-searching and reflection are developed based on general negative self-attitude. Accordingly, this method of conflict autocommunication does not bring relief, but on the contrary – increases tension. Therefore, risk behavior in this case becomes a “salvation” for removing internal tension and gaining positive emotions and satisfaction.

The low values according to the Self-Control Scale confirm proneness to be influenced by external events and circumstances, the weakness of self. The combination of these trends in the peculiarities of students’ self-assessment affects the need for risk and the constant desire to satisfy it.

According to the results of the Freiburg Personality Inventory, university and vocational school students have the highest score according to the Reactive Aggression

Scale. On the background of this, there is a high level of psychopathization in them, which is manifested in aggression towards social environment and a tendency to domination, as well as predominance of emotional instability and propensity to affect in order to avoid stress.

High scores according to the Impatience Scale are peculiar for vocational school students as distinct from university ones, which indicates the presence of emotional instability and the tendency to respond in an effort to avoid tension in situations.

Also, to some extent, manifestation of spontaneous aggressiveness, which creates conditions for risk behavior, dominated by impulsivity, is peculiar for them.

High scores according to the Emotional Lability Scale are observed in both groups, however, among university students they are higher. It means that they are characterized by emotional instability, which is accompanied in most cases by mood swings, increased excitability, irritability due to lack of self-regulation.

It is worth noting that university students, unlike vocational school students, are more self-unconfident, they rarely show caution in establishing contacts with others. In this group, extrovert personalities are predominant, and their mental activity is characterized by the male type.

According to the results of the Level of Subjective Control Inventory, vocational school students believe their achievements are due to external circumstances (other people, fate, luck, etc.). They do not take responsibility for negative events of their lives (Fig.3).

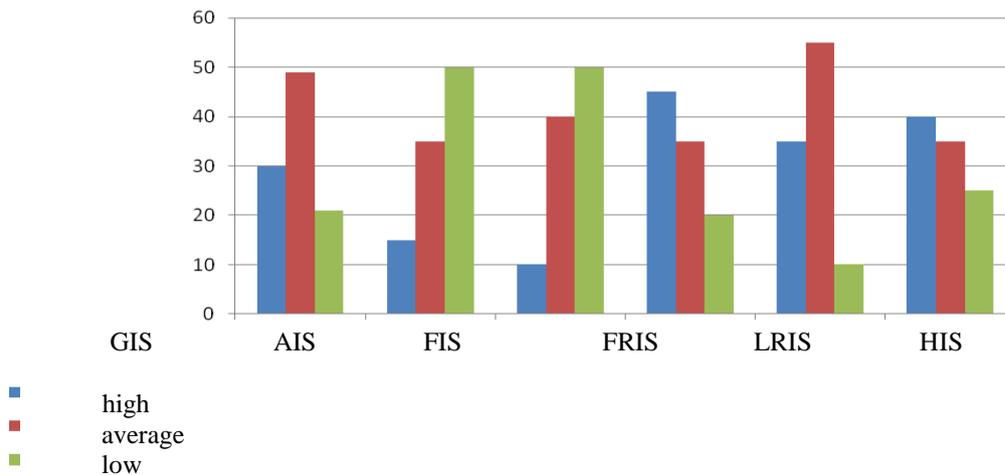


Fig. 3. Indicators of Subjective Control Scales for Vocational School Students

NB: GIS – general internality scale, AIS – achievements internality scale, failure internality scale, family relationships internality scale, labor relations internality scale, health internality scale.

University students have average indicators according to the scale of general internality, internality in family relations, labor relations, and high indicators according to the scale of internality in the areas of achievement, failures, as well as in the areas of health and illness.

The respondents are characterized by a high level of subjective control. They are convinced that everything they achieved is due to themselves. Also, they tend to be responsible for their health (Figure 4).

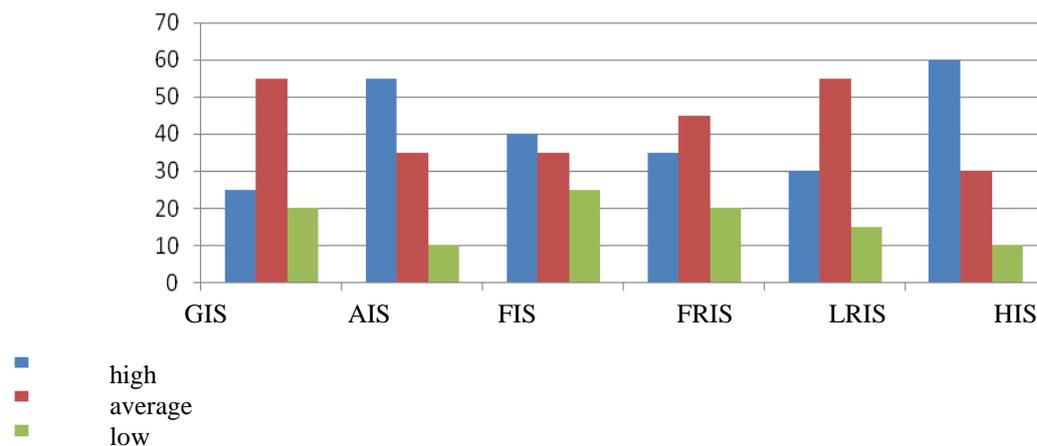


Fig. 4. Indicators of Subjective Control Scales for University Students

NB: GIS – general internality scale, AIS – achievements internality scale, failure internality scale, family relationships internality scale, labor relations internality scale, health internality scale.

Also, in the process of quantitative processing of the results, a correlation analysis was carried out (Figure 5).

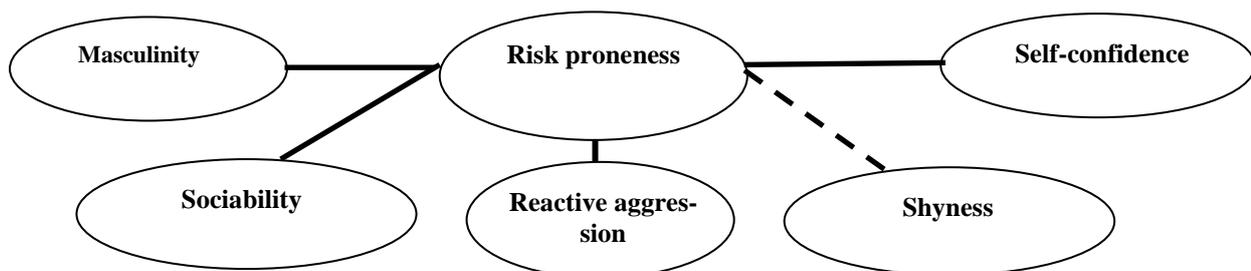


Fig. 5. Correlation Relationships of Risk Appetite with Other Factors

According to the results of the correlation analysis, positive correlation relationships between “masculinity-femininity” and “risk proneness” factors ($r = 0.5090$, $p \leq 0.01$) were found (with increasing masculinity risk proneness increases as well). That is, individuals with masculine qualities such as: self-confidence, independence, persistence, striving for leadership, self-sufficiency, are more prone to risk behavior.

There are also correlation relationships with risk proneness and sociability factors ($r = 0.3306$, $p \leq 0.01$) (with increasing risk proneness sociability increases). It means that individuals expressing the need to communicate and expand contacts with others are more prone to risk. Because risk behavior is an attempt to stamp oneself and make contacts with others, it is a peculiar part of establishing relationships in young age.

The correlation relationship between risk proneness and reactive aggression factors ($r = 0.482373$, $p \leq 0.01$) (with increasing risk proneness, reactive aggression increases) is worth emphasizing. That is, individuals who are characterized by an aggressive attitude towards social environment and expressed desire for domination have a greater tendency to risk behavior.

The correlation between risk proneness and self-confidence ($r = 0.4461$, $p \leq 0.01$) (with an increase of risk proneness, self-confidence increases) means that persons who consider themselves to be independent, strong-willed, energetic, reliable, are more prone to risk behavior.

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There is a negative correlation ($r = -0.3880$, $p \leq 0.01$) between risk proneness and shyness factors (with increasing risk proneness, shyness decreases). It is obvious that uncertain people have less temptations and needs for the implementation of risky actions.

According to the results of the study, it can be stated that the respondents' risk proneness is rather low, although when comparing boys and girls, the tendency for risk behavior is lower in female students. Most of the subjects have the average level of risk proneness. They have internal conflicts, doubts, possible anxiety-depressive states, which are accompanied by feelings of guilt, which is the reason for the low level of risk proneness. In addition, they have low self-control level, which indicates that they are affected by external influences.

Conclusions

According to the results of the theoretical-empirical analysis, it has been found that risk behavior is the choice of behavior strategy taking into account the danger and impossibility to predict the consequences. As a result of the conducted empirical research, a set of personal factors influencing the formation of risk behavior in students (namely, masculinity, sociability, reactive aggression, self-confidence and shyness) was revealed.

Further research is going to cover the issue of the influence of socio-cultural and socio-psychological factors on the manifestation of risk behavior of students.

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ОСОБИСТІСНІ ЧИННИКИ РИЗИКОВОЇ ПОВЕДІНКИ СУЧАСНОЇ МОЛОДІ

Стаття присвячена дослідженню впливу особистісних факторів на прояви ризикової поведінки особистості. Ризикова поведінка зазвичай пов'язана з викликом особистості та небезпекою. Об'єктивна оцінка ризику та ступеня ризику при виконанні відповідних завдань, прояв схильності до ризикованої поведінки є надзвичайно важливими для безпеки особистості в різних життєвих ситуаціях. Особливо це стосується молодих людей, тому що їх потреба у ризику зростає завдяки пошуку пригод, цікавих подій, інтенсивних емоцій і, відповідно, внутрішньої готовності ризикувати на різних рівнях (фізичному, соціальному, правовому) для набуття досвіду через реалізацію таких дій. У статті описано емоційні, когнітивні та вольові компоненти в структурі ризикованої поведінки. Подано вичерпний опис сучасних досліджень ризикованої поведінки та ризику. На підставі результатів емпіричного дослідження (порівняльного та кореляційного аналізу) досліджено особистісні фактори, що сприяють формуванню ризикованої поведінки сучасної молоді. Особистісні фактори, пов'язані з формуванням ризикованої поведінки у студентської молоді, – це маскулітність, комунікабельність, реакційна агресія, впевненість у собі та сором'язливість. За результатами дослідження студенти мають низький рівень самоконтролю, що може спровокувати виникнення ризикових дій, оскільки це пов'язано з неможливістю протистояти обставинам, відсутністю тенденцій пошуку причин дій та результатів у собі.

Ключові слова: ризик, ризикованість, поведінка ризику, схильність до ризику, готовність до ризику, потреба у переживаннях, самоконтроль.

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