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SELF-REPORTED CHARACTER STRENGTHS PERTINENT TO GELOTOPHOBES, GELOTOPHILES AND KATAGELASTICISTS

Анотація. Наведено стислий огляд результатів останніх досліджень трьох нових концепцій (гелотофобії, гелотофілії та катагеластичизму) у галузі психології особистості. Розглянуто результати перевірки зв'язку особливостей реагування на гумор і сміх із такими психологічними феноменами, як «сильні» риси характеру. Визначено перспективи подальшого дослідження характерних рис внутрішнього світу гелотофобів, гелотофілів і катагеластичистів.

Ключові слова: гелотофобія, гелотофілія, катагеластичизм, «сильні» риси характеру.

Аннотация. Рассмотрены современные представления об общечеловеческих ценностях и разных формах проявления юмора (гелотофобии, гелотофилии и катагеластичизме). Представлены результаты эмпирического исследования взаимосвязи между «сильными» чертами характера и особенностями реагирования на юмор и смех. Приведено описание возможности практического применения полученных данных в расширении методов психодиагностики.

Ключевые слова: гелотофобия, гелотофилия, катагеластичизм, «сильные» черты характера.

Introduction

Over the years psychologists have studied the relationships between humor and personality in a number of ways. For instance, humor has been studied as a cognitive ability to produce humorous material, an aesthetic response, a habitual behavior depending upon the temperament of the individual, the attitude toward the world and as a means of coping with adverse situations (Martin, 2007). In the newest publications humor has been conceptualized as one of the so-called “character strengths”, to which people resort more or less frequently depending on the level of development of the virtue of transcendence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Positive psychologists have singled out twenty four measurable character strengths which are claimed to be formed if one sticks to the six positive virtues: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. In the Values-in-Action classification, *humor* (as a sign of playfulness) is understood as an inclination to laugh and joke, evoking smiles in other people. C. Peterson and M. Seligman (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) refer to the moral character of humor and its role in “making the human condition more bearable by drawing attention to its contradictions, by sustaining good cheer in the face of despair, by building social bonds, and by lubricating social interaction” (p. 530). Humor is considered to be a form of manifestation of the positive personality functioning and a sign of mental health (Buschor, Proyer & Ruch, 2013; Niemiec, 2013).

Researchers of Dnipropetrovsk National University E. L. Nosenko and O. A. Zayvaya (Nosenko & Zayvaya, 2004) revealed the stress-protective function of humor, demonstrated the relationship between humor styles and personality dispositions and showed that affiliative and self-enhancing styles of humor manifestations were more pertinent to the individuals with higher levels of openness to experience, while aggressive humor was found out to characterize individuals prone to neuroticism.

Dispositions towards ridicule and being laughed at

The mainstream psychology researchers have recently identified three new laughter-related concepts: gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism. German psychotherapist Michael Titze coined the term *gelotophobia* (from the Greek *gelos* –

laughter, and *phobia* – fear) for describing the fear of being laughed at (Titze, 2007). Gelotophobia is manifested in the behavior as a result of the dysfunction of the harmonious interplay between physical motions and social withdrawal. Although gelotophobes long for human proximity, acknowledgement, and love, they constantly distance themselves from others.

Lately two new extensions of the gelotophobia concept have been presented: *gelotophilia* (from the Greek *gelos* – laughter, and *philia* – love) – the joy of being laughed at, and *katagelasticism* (from the Greek *katagelao* – laughing at) – the joy experienced in the situations of laughing at others (Ruch & Proyer, 2009). At present gelotophobia as well as the interrelated forms of humor perception and manifestation are interpreted as individual difference phenomena. In this capacity these new forms of laughter behavior have not yet been studied sufficiently in the mainstream personality research. The researchers only clarified that there were no relationships between socio-demographic variables and gelotophobia in normal individuals. The lack of sex differences is particularly noteworthy since they are reported in the literature for other phobias (Ruch & Proyer, 2008).

One of the latest studies (Ruch, Harzer & Proyer, 2013) examined the personality correlates of gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism in the framework of the five-factor model. On a sample of 1,774 adults the researchers found out that gelotophobes were introverted neurotics with lower inclinations to openness. Furthermore, adjectives like shy, inhibited, and insecure were indicative of gelotophobia. Gelotophilia appeared to be related to extraversion, low neuroticism and low conscientiousness. Gelotophiles were described by adjectives like cheerful, talkative, original, witty, and uninhibited. Katagelasticists were found to be younger males with low scores on agreeableness and conscientiousness. Adjectives like cynical and vengeful correlated robustly with katagelasticism.

However, for a complete picture of the experiential world of gelotophobes, gelotophiles and katagelasticists variables of positive psychological functioning are also needed and a comprehensive model such as the VIA-classification seems to be best suited for this effort.

The aim of the present study

The main aim of the present study was to examine the correlations between gelotophobia, gelotophilia, katagelasticism and self-reported character strengths. The relations between virtuousness and dispositions towards ridicule and being laughed at might not necessarily be linear. It was hypothesized that self-ratings of morally positively valued traits (character strengths) might demonstrate different correlational patterns with gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 125 adults, 40 male and 85 female, whose ages ranged from 18 years to 61 years ($M = 23.86$; $SD = 8.22$). Most of the participants were the students of Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University (51 %) and Dnipropetrovsk State Agrarian University (24 %). Participants were contacted in person or via e-mail. They were not paid for their services but upon request could receive an individual feedback via e-mail one to two months after they finished the study.

Data tools

The *PhoPhiKat-45* questionnaire (Ruch & Proyer, 2009) was used for the subjective assessment of gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism. It consists of

45 items assessed with a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = moderately disagree; 3 = moderately agree; 4 = strongly agree). The Russian version of the PhoPhiKat-45 was adapted by E. M. Ivanova, E. A. Stefanenko, R. T. Proyer, W. Ruch and S. N. Enikolopov (2013). Cronbach's alpha values were 0.83 (Gelotophobia), 0.83 (Gelotophilia) and 0.77 (Katagelasticism).

The Values-in-Action Inventory of Strengths – VIA-IS (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) which consists of 240 items was used for the subjective assessment of 24 character strengths (10 items each), pertinent to the subjects. It uses a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = “very much like me” through 5 = “very much unlike me”). The Russian version of the VIA-IS was adapted by I. A. Burovikhina, D. A. Leontiev and E. N. Osin (Burovikhina, Leontiev & Osin, 2007). Cronbach's alpha values of each of 24 scales were more than 0.7.

Procedure

All participants filled in the questionnaires that were given or mailed to them. They were not paid for their services. The participants received a detailed feedback on their results.

Results and Discussion

The participants' data demonstrated that the chosen sample consisted of 14.4 % (n = 18) of individuals with a slight expression of gelotophobia, 3.2 % (n = 4) – with a pronounced expression, and 0.8 % (n = 1) – with an extreme expression (presence) of the fear of being laughed at. There were also 24.8 % (n = 31) of individuals with gelotophilia, and 32.8 % (n = 41) – with katagelasticism. The mean scores for the three dispositions towards ridicule and being laughed at were normally distributed (Skewness = 0.37, Kurtosis = 0.26 for gelotophobia; Sk = 0.01 and K = 0.83 for gelotophilia; and Sk = -0.20 and K = 1.18 for katagelasticism).

We computed correlation coefficients between twenty four character strengths and three dispositions towards ridicule and being laughed at. Table 1 contains the correlation coefficients between the laughter-related categories and the character strengths that fall under the virtue of *humanity*.

Table 1. Correlations between gelotophobia, gelotophilia, katagelasticism and the character strengths of “Humanity” virtue

Character strengths	Gelotophobia	Gelotophilia	Katagelasticism
Love	-0.3333	0.1561	0.1224
	p=0.000	p=0.082	p=0.174
Kindness	-0.2863	0.1122	-0.0475
	p=0.001	p=0.213	p=0.599
Social intelligence	-0.3642	0.0461	0.078
	p=0.000	p=0.610	p=0.387

Table 2 contains the correlation coefficients between the laughter-related categories and the character strengths that fall under the virtue of *courage*.

Table 2 . Correlations between gelotophobia, gelotophilia, katagelasticism and the character strengths of “Courage” virtue

Character strengths	Gelotophobia	Gelotophilia	Katagelasticism
Bravery	-0.3337	0.0819	0.0693
	p=0.000	p=0.364	p=0.442
Persistence	-0.1467	0.1649	0.1204
	p=0.102	p=0.066	p=0.181
Authenticity	-0.21	0.1087	-0.0097
	p=0.019	p=0.228	p=0.914
Zest	-0.403	0.2472	0.1336
	p=0.000	p=0.005	p=0.138

Table 3 contains the correlation coefficients between the laughter-related categories and the character strengths that fall under the virtue of *wisdom and knowledge*.

Table 3. Correlations between gelotophobia, gelotophilia, katagelasticism and the character strengths of “Wisdom and knowledge” virtue

Character strengths	Gelotophobia	Gelotophilia	Katagelasticism
Creativity	-0.1021	0.002	0.0465
	p=0.257	p=0.982	p=0.607
Curiosity	-0.364	0.1059	-0.0666
	p=0.000	p=0.240	p=0.461
Open-mindedness	-0.4163	0.0126	0.0067
	p=0.000	p=0.889	p=0.941
Love of learning	-0.2514	-0.1028	-0.2013
	p=0.005	p=0.254	p=0.024
Perspective	-0.3774	-0.1409	-0.0282
	p=0.000	p=0.117	p=0.755

Tables 1-3 show that the fear of being laughed at was negatively correlated with love, kindness, social intelligence, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective, bravery, authenticity and zest. Zest was positively related to the joy of being laughed at. Love of learning was negatively related to the joy of laughing at others.

The correlation coefficients between three dispositions towards ridicule and being laughed at and the character strengths that fall under the virtue of *justice* are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlations between gelotophobia, gelotophilia, katagelasticism and the character strengths of “Justice” virtue

Character strengths	Gelotophobia	Gelotophilia	Katagelasticism
Teamwork	0.0614	0.3218	0.0215
	p=0.496	p=0.000	p=0.812
Fairness	-0.1715	0.1542	-0.1883
	p=0.056	p=0.086	p=0.035
Leadership	-0.1956	0.1988	0.0348
	p=0.029	p=0.026	p=0.700

The correlation coefficients between three dispositions towards ridicule and being laughed at and the character strengths that fall under the virtue of *temperance* are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Correlations between gelotophobia, gelotophilia, katagelasticism and the character strengths of “Temperance” virtue

Character strengths	Gelotophobia	Gelotophilia	Katagelasticism
Forgiveness	-0.0814	0.0669	-0.1525
	p=0.367	p=0.459	p=0.089
Modesty	0.2315	-0.0416	-0.2069
	p=0.009	p=0.645	p=0.021
Prudence	-0.0196	-0.0158	-0.257
	p=0.828	p=0.861	p=0.004
Self-regulation	0.0332	0.0032	-0.2459
	p=0.713	p=0.972	p=0.006

The correlation coefficients between three dispositions towards ridicule and being laughed at and the character strengths that fall under the virtue of *transcendence* are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlations between gelotophobia, gelotophilia, katagelasticism and the character strengths of “Transcendence” virtue

Character strengths	Gelotophobia	Gelotophilia	Katagelasticism
Appreciation of beauty and excellence	-0.1086	-0.0873	-0.1563
	p=0.228	p=0.333	p=0.082
Gratitude	-0.3729	0.0967	-0.0354
	p=0.000	p=0.283	p=0.695
Hope	-0.3872	0.2187	0.1762
	p=0.000	p=0.014	p=0.049
Humor	-0.4462	0.2511	0.1977
	p=0.000	p=0.005	p=0.027
Spirituality	-0.151	0.0698	-0.017
	p=0.093	p=0.439	p=0.850

As shown in Tables 4-6, gelotophobia was negatively correlated with leadership, gratitude, hope and humor. Interestingly, there was only one character strength that was positively related to gelotophobia – modesty. Gelotophilia was positively correlated with teamwork, leadership and humor. Katagelasticism was negatively correlated with fairness, modesty, prudence and self-regulation. Humor was positively related to the joy of laughing at others.

The results demonstrate that gelotophobia was negatively related to fourteen out of the twenty four character strengths. Among them *modesty* seems to be of special interest. The design of the study does not allow for causal interpretations of the results and therefore it is unclear whether gelotophobia leads to modesty (as it diminishes the risk of being laughed at) or whether modest people develop gelotophobia (e.g., because they might be of the opinion that their major accomplishments cannot keep up with the accomplishments of others and therefore fear being laughed at).

Open-mindedness, zest, hope and humor yielded the highest negative relations. According to C. Peterson and M. Seligman (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 144), *open-mindedness* is to be interpreted as an active strength: “Open-mindedness is the willingness to search actively for evidence against one’s favored beliefs, plans, or goals, and to weigh such evidence fairly when it is available”. Thinking of gelotophobes as introverted and withdrawn persons one can assume that critical thinking is rather difficult for them.

The pursuit of actively seeking activities (challenging opportunities) seems to be reduced among gelotophobes. The negative correlation to *zest*, which is closely related to an “energetic” view of the world, fits well into this picture.

There is a negative relation between gelotophobia and *hope/optimism*. Optimistic people have a positive stance towards the future and think that the future will hold something good for them – in terms of desired events and wishes come true (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This view is obviously biased in gelotophobes. Though the design of the study does not allow for causal interpretations of the results one might assume that gelotophobes might benefit from interventions designed for enhancing optimism.

Gelotophobia was also negatively related to the character strength of *humor*. Not being able to master their fear of being laughed at it had to be expected that gelotophobes would see themselves as low in humor.

However, certain character strengths (creativity, persistence, teamwork, fairness, forgiveness, prudence, self-regulation, spirituality and appreciation of beauty and excellence) existed independently from the expression of gelotophobia.

Gelotophilia was positively correlated with *zest/vitality*, *teamwork* and *leadership*. These character strengths can be interpreted as active ones. Thus, a vital person is energetic and fully functioning. Teamwork is a feeling of identification with and sense of obligation to a common good that includes the self but that stretches beyond one’s own self-interest. Leadership reflects the motivation and capacity to seek out, attain, and successfully carry out leader roles in social systems (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). As far as gelotophiles are stable extraverts who can be described by adjectives such as cheerful, talkative, original, witty and uninhibited (Ruch et al., 2013), the correlation between gelotophilia and the abovementioned active character strengths is quite understandable.

Gelotophilia was found to be positively correlated with *humor*. It can be explained by the fact that gelotophiles do not interpret the laughter of others as a sign of being inferior to others but as a sign of their appreciation (e.g., for sharing their misfortunes with others in a witty, entertaining, and self-confident way) (Ruch & Proyer, 2009). Secondly, numerous authors see the ability to laugh at oneself as a core component of the sense of humor and an important part of mental health and well-being. For example, V. E. Frankl (Frankl, 2000) states that this ability is helpful in the search for the (ultimate) meaning in one’s life. Furthermore, learning to laugh at oneself is used in certain therapy programs (Borcherdt, 2002), and it is also part of the training program for the development of the sense of humor by P. E. McGhee (McGhee, 1999). As W. Ruch and A. Carrell (Ruch & Carrell, 1998) point out, the expression of laughing at oneself could be interpreted metaphorically and it should be best understood as seeing and accepting one’s own shortcomings and mishaps.

Katagelasticism was negatively related to *love of learning* and *fairness*. This relation seems somewhat obvious from the descriptions of katagelasticians given in the literature. For instance, katagelasticians do not hesitate embarrassing others beyond what is commonly accepted in social interactions, compromising others is fun for them (Ruch & Proyer, 2009). They are known to indicate low aversion towards aggressive humor (Samson & Meyer, 2010) and additionally are not guilt-prone (Proyer, Platt & Ruch, 2010). If katagelasticians were cognitively engaged and could determine what is morally right, what is morally wrong and what is morally proscribed, they would not especially enjoy aggressive variants of humor.

Modesty, prudence and self-regulation were also negatively related to the joy of laughing at others. According to C. Peterson and M. Seligman (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), these strengths of temperance are the positive traits that protect us from excess (arrogance – against which modesty protects us; short-term pleasure with long-term costs – against which prudence protects us; destabilizing emotional extremes of all sorts – against which self-regulation protects us). Katagelasticians seem to overestimate their merits, lack practical reasoning and self-management. Such findings correspond to the results of previous researches. W. Ruch and R. T. Proyer (Ruch & Proyer, 2009) state that the behavior of these persons entails a somewhat antisocial or rude component. The katagelasticians' prime characteristics are low agreeableness and low conscientiousness, or, alternatively, they are witty and cynical (Ruch et al., 2013). The former result seems to relate to earlier findings on a positive relationship between psychoticism and psychopathic personality traits and katagelasticism (Proyer & Ruch 2010). Thus, one might argue that katagelasticians are not necessarily outgoing or affiliation seeking for enjoying to laugh at others – it might probably be more a question of observing others very closely and then using a chance to laugh at others if there is an opportunity to do so.

Since katagelasticians typically hold the opinion that laughing at others is part of the daily life (Ruch & Proyer, 2009), it is absolutely clear why *humor* was positively related to katagelasticism.

The empirical data demonstrate that gelotophobia, gelotophilia and katagelasticism can be located in the framework of the VIA-classification.

Conclusion

The scientific research on the three dispositions towards ridicule and being laughed at has only recently begun but the first results are encouraging. The findings of the present study suggest that there is a robust relation between the way individuals deal with ridicule and the situations of being laughed at and their strength profile. Self-assessed gelotophobia was primarily negatively related to the character strengths (especially to open-mindedness, zest, hope and humor), whereas only modesty yielded positive relations. Gelotophilia demonstrated mainly positive relations with zest, teamwork, leadership and humor. Katagelasticism was negatively correlated with love of learning, fairness, modesty, prudence and self-regulation while humor was positively related to the joy of laughing at others.

As a limitation of the study, it should be noted that the results presented here primarily rely on self-rating data. Further research is needed utilizing both self- and peer-rating data to validate the findings. But even at this point there are grounds to claim that research findings open up new prospects for using the observations of humor-related behavior for the implicit personality assessment. The fear of being laughed at, easily recognized in the course of the interpersonal interaction, can be interpreted as predictive of the existence of some inner personality conflicts. In the psychodiagnostic practice humor-related behavior had been studied as a means of probing the inner problems area, diagnosed in the widely known “Test of Humorous Phrases” (Shmelev & Boldyreva, 1982).

We see the prospects of continuing this line of research in the psychotherapeutic practice.

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**ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ОСНОВИ ВИВЧЕННЯ ПСИХОСОМАТИЧНИХ
 ЗАХВОРЮВАНЬ, СПРИЧИНЕНИХ РОЗЛАДАМИ
 ПСИХОСЕСУАЛЬНОЇ СФЕРИ ОСОБИСТОСТІ**

Анотація. Обґрунтовано психосоматичний підхід до розуміння захворювань, спричинених розладами психосексуальної сфери особистості. Доведено, що численні сексуальні дисгармонії та психогенні сексуальні дисфункції – результат впливу різних психотравматичних факторів. Підкреслено важливу роль психотерапії в лікуванні психосексуальних порушень.

Ключові слова: психосоматика, мотиваційний конфлікт, статеве життя, сексуальні дисфункції, сексуальні дисгармонії, психотерапія.

Аннотация. На основе психосоматического подхода к изучению и пониманию причин органических заболеваний показана взаимосвязь между психологическими и медицинскими проблемами человека. В большинстве случаев расстройства психосексуальной сферы личности (сексуальные дисгармонии и сексуальные дисфункции) обусловлены психогенными факторами и с точки зрения психосоматики могут являться главными факторами возникновения определенных органических заболеваний.

Ключевые слова: психосоматика, психосексуальная сфера, сексуальные дисфункции, дисгармония, психотерапия.

Постановка проблеми. Одне з провідних положень медичної психології наголошує на єдності психічного і соматичного, тобто психічний або емоційний стан людини безпосередньо пов'язаний із фізичним. Виходячи з цього, необхідно досліджувати та розкривати такі психосоматичні механізми, які б давали можливість фахівцям шляхом психічних впливів здійснювати необхідну перебудову фізіологічних процесів в організмі хворого. Психосоматичні захворювання – це недуги тіла, причину яких потрібно шукати в душі людини (її сприйнятті світу та ставленні до подій, до себе та інших).

Об'єктом нашого дослідження є психосексуальна сфера особистості, яка активно впливає на психічне та фізичне здоров'я людини. **Мета дослідження** – розглянути теоретичні підходи до пояснення причин психосоматичних захворювань, розкрити особливості прояву сексуальних дисгармоній та їх впливу на здоров'я людини.

Психосексуальні переживання впливають на весь організм, зокрема на соматичну сферу, включаючи вегетативні процеси, біохімічні реакції тощо. Досвід психотерапевтичної діяльності звертає нашу увагу на певну залежність