

Humor as a Resource for Confronting Wartime Challenges

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Abstract. The aim of the study is to identify Ukrainian social media audiences' preferences for humor styles to maintain/enhance their psychological resilience in different periods of wartime. Discourse analysis developed in the framework of social constructionism was used for collecting and analyzing data. We argue that 1) the preferences in humor styles is directly influenced not only by contextual factors and the duration of the stressor, but by the audience's psycho-emotional state and its intentions; 2) aggressive humor style is especially in demand in the period of adaptation to the traumatic event, but the audience can use its various forms depending on their effectiveness for a particular purpose. Thus, black humor is productive for emotional venting of negative emotion of anger and reducing of emotional distress; disparagement humor is effective for formation of collective identity and increasing of optimism; 3) self-enhancing humor style can serve as a sign of positive shifts in the process of adaptation to a psychologically traumatic situation, and restoration of the population's psychological stability; 4) self-defeating humor style is actualized in wartime as a form of adaptive humor, since it promotes a sense of community (belonging to a group) and identification through the experience of a shared stressful situation; and also positively correlates with self-esteem as a result of an individual's demonstration of his/her ability to maintain self-control and to keep calm and carry on when faced with stressful situations.

Keywords: *emotion, humor, wartime stress, traumatic experience.*

Храбан Тетяна. Гумор як ресурс для протистояння проти викликів воєнного часу.

Анотація. Мета дослідження – виявити вподобання української аудиторії соціальних мереж щодо стилів гумору для підтримки/підвищення психологічної стійкості в різні періоди воєнного часу. Для збору та аналізу даних було використано дискурс-аналіз, розроблений у рамках соціального конструкціонізму. Авторка стверджує, що 1) на вподобання щодо стилів гумору безпосередньо впливають не лише контекстуальні чинники та тривалість дії стресора, але й психоемоційний стан аудиторії та її інтенції; 2) агресивний стиль гумору особливо затребуваний у період адаптації до травматичної події, але аудиторія може використовувати різні його форми залежно від їхньої ефективності для досягнення конкретної мети. Наприклад, чорний гумор є продуктивним для емоційного виходу негативної емоції гніву та зменшення емоційного дистресу; зневажливий гумор ефективний для формування колективної ідентичності та підвищення оптимізму; 3) самостверджуючий стиль гумору може слугувати ознакою позитивних зрушень у процесі адаптації до психотравмуючої ситуації, відновлення психологічної стійкості населення; 4) самокритичний стиль гумору актуалізується у воєнний час як форма адаптивного гумору, оскільки сприяє формуванню

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почуття спільності (приналежності до групи) та ідентифікації через переживання спільної стресової ситуації, а також позитивно корелює зі самооцінкою внаслідок демонстрації індивідом своєї здатності зберігати самоконтроль, зберігати спокій та витримку у стресових ситуаціях.

Ключові слова: емоції, гумор, війна, стрес, травматичний досвід.

Introduction

War is the most terrible ordeal and traumatic experience not only for soldiers but also for civilians. An important distinction of the war currently going on in Ukraine is the occupant country's utter disregard for the norms of international law regulating the conduct of armed hostilities, justification of prohibited methods of warfare (terror, destruction of civilian infrastructure). All this is taking place against the backdrop of the Russian Federation's dissemination of hostile propaganda and various manipulative information. Psychologic traumatic experience (horrors of war, constant real and perceived threats to life, dealing with survivor's guilt, uncertainty and lack of information, change of routines and habits, insomnia and disrupted sleep patterns) can lead to emotional exhaustion and emotional instability, that is, the ability to withstand difficult situations hardship or stress (Basım & Çetin, 2011; Yavuz & Dilmaç, 2020), and, as a consequence, to emotional overstrain and inability to cope with stress. And this is a pressing issue not only for servicemen, but also for civilians. Possession of adaptability skills is a prerequisite for coping with the challenges of war. There are many different skills that can be helpful for psychological resilience (Cann & Collette, 2014), however, with the development of positive psychology, humor has become a frequently studied subject category within the framework of this research field (Başak & Can, 2014). According to psychological studies in positive psychology, humor can be used as a coping tool (Alvord et al., 2011; Satıcı & Deniz, 2017), and preferences for humor style can serve as criteria to identify the personality psychological states (Kuiper, 2012; Pidgeon & Keye, 2014; Gremigni, 2012). Arguing that humor benefits in struggle with upsetting emotions, memories, anxiety, Martin and Ford (2018) metaphorically describe humor mechanisms as the operation of a hydraulic engine, in which laughter acts as a pressure valve in a steam pipe and releases the pressure accumulated in the organism. However, it should be noted that in the context of coping with war related stress, of particular interest is humor (Kaya & Yağan, 2022) considered as individuals' emotional reaction to stressful experiences through laughter, and tendency to ridicule those experiences with others and joke about them (Martin, 2007) as well as the ability to positively reappraise stressors and to use humor to cope with them through support or enhance psychological resilience (Cann & Collette, 2014; Kuiper, 2012).

Literature Review

This study is based on the model of adaptive and maladaptive humor styles developed by Martin and colleagues (2003). The style of humor is considered as a certain model that correlates with a personality behavior strategy that is most effective to manage and reduce psycho-emotional strain and pressure arising as

reactions to stressful situations. This model is founded on the idea that there are two positive styles of humor, they are affirmative and self-enhancing, and two negative styles, they are aggressive and self-defeating. Affiliative humor is friendly, funny, accepting of self and others, designed to enhance one's relationships with others by telling funny anecdotes and engaging in witty banter (Martin et al., 2003; Fritz, 2022). Self-enhancing humor is positive humor based on self-reflection on humorous aspects of daily life (Fritz et al., 2017), and designed to enhance one's own mood or the effectiveness of coping with difficulties through creating a humorous perspective when faced with stress or hardship (Fritz, 2022). Aggressive humor is sarcastic humor designed to treat others harshly by disparaging, ridiculing, or excessively mocking (Martin et al., 2003; Fritz, 2022). Self-defeating humor involves excessive self-criticism or self-mockery in an attempt to gain approval from others (Fritz, 2020; Kfrerer, 2018; Rnic et al., 2016).

Humor is a multidimensional phenomenon, which includes a complex of cognitive, behavioral, psychological, social and emotional aspects (Betha, 2001), therefore, there are several mediators that link humor with indicators of the individual's psychological resilience. Cognitive reappraisal is the main mediator to minimize the emotional and physiological effects of stressors (Fritz et al., 2017; Mallya et al., 2019; Perchtold et al., 2019). Reassessment is conceptualized as a person's ability to embrace a stressful event as a positive challenge rather than a negative threat (Fritz et al., 2017). Fritz (Fritz, 2020) points out that humor-driven cognitive reassessment enhances psychological resilience in two ways. First, putting the situation in perspective (through comparing it to other worse events) helps to mitigate its negative emotional impact on the individual, even if he or she is unable to change anything. Second, rethinking a stressful event in order to find some meaning, higher purpose or benefit in it may result in a feeling of control over the event or its consequences (Cann & Collette, 2014; Dozois, Martin & Bieling, 2009; Kuiper, 2012). Affirmative and self-enhancing styles of humor are the most conceptually close to positive reappraisal, while self-defeating humor does not correlate with positive reappraisal (Fritz, 2020).

Another mediator between humor styles and psychological resilience is social support. Humor styles are correlated with different models of support (Fritz, 2020). Self-enhancing and affirmative humor correlate with positive communication and with productive social interaction, while self-deprecating humor correlates with negative communication, which is a risk factor that can break down social interaction (Martin, 2007; Rieger & McGrail, 2015). The correlation of aggressive humor with psychological resilience and social support is ambivalent; it may vary depending on the communicative situation. For example, in the situation of creating a "friend-or-foe" opposition, aggressive humor can enhance social support within the group, but can also contribute to greater interpersonal difficulties and a breakdown of relations with outsiders.

Latest research on humor demonstrate that humor is often correlated with individual's different psychological and physical characteristics, which can provide resources in confronting difficulties (Cann & Collette, 2014). Research on humor as a resource of psychological resilience of the individual is focused on a comprehensive

study of 1) direct and stress-buffering effects of dispositional humor and different humor styles on health-related indicators; 2) relationships between humor constructs and cognitive reappraisal; 3) extent to which social interaction and reappraisal statistically mediate the correlation between humor and health (Fritz et al., 2017). Of interest for this study are works (Jiang et al., 2020; Schneider et al., 2018; Caird & Martin, 2014; Heintz, 2019; Heintz & Ruch, 2015; Ford et al., 2017; Kfrerer, 2018) that explain the correlation between humor styles and psychological well-being, one component of which is psychological resilience. Researchers have found that affirmational and self-enhancing humor are generally positively correlate with improvement in psychological well-being, while self-defeating humor correlates with psychological distress, and aggressive humor demonstrates a weak and inconsistent relationship with psychological well-being (Fritz, 2022). These findings have been reinforced, refined and further enriched in Fritz's later works (Fritz, 2020; 2022), in which a consistent pattern is identified: "Positive humor use predicted reduced psychological distress in response to stressful events, more positive social interactions, greater reappraisal of stressful events, and stress-buffering effects such that under high stress conditions, high humor use protected participants from elevated distress" (Fritz, 2020). The scholar also offered an explanation for the case in which aggressive humor is not associated with distress: since aggressive humor simultaneously brings about both negative (through its relationship with poor social interactions) and positive results (through its stress-buffering, "better than nothing" effects under high stress levels), its net effect on distress may be limited (Fritz, 2020). The works also shed light on the relationship between self-defeating humor and social interaction: self-defeating humor may be very likely to provoke negative reactions from others, as people experiencing the same stressful event may perceive the humor as an action that negates their own efforts to manage the stress (Fritz, 2020). Thus, self-defeating humor, while not directly contributing to psychological distress, drives it through a deterioration of the relationship between the author of the humor and the audience.

The present study intends to expand the previous works on the effects of humor styles on psychological well-being. In this paper, we focus on studying how contextual factors and the duration of the stressor can shape the preference for humor styles. The aim of the study is to identify Ukrainian social media audiences' preferences for humor styles to maintain/enhance their psychological resilience in different periods of wartime.

Method

Material and Procedure

Basing on the premise that the relationship between humor styles and psychological resilience is extremely stable and consistent in various studies (Gremigni, 2012), we have made an assumption, that during different periods of a stressful situation, especially if that stressful situation is characterized by its duration,

people favor different humor styles to maintain/increase their psychological resilience, depending on contextual factors (environment, time, place, facts of reality). Study of the differences in humor style preferences on a diverse sample of participants (taking into account ethnicity, education/literacy; gender identity, age) and over a long period of time involves a longitudinal research design. The longitudinal strategy increases the likelihood that the cause-and-effect relationship between humor styles and contextual factors will be pronounced.

In the study, we applied discourse psychology, that is discourse analysis developed in the framework of social constructionism, the research direction of which is “comprehensive practical reasoning” (Edwards, 2005). Discourse psychology enables to focus on complex psychological issues such as cognition, emotions, attitudes, values, prejudices, memory, motives (Potter & Wiggins, 2007). Discursive psychology is the most empirically-oriented approach that considers the subject of research in the social context, and relies not on the direct study of the individual, but on indirect evidence of certain attitudes and beliefs that are manifested in oral and written language (Hepburn & Wiggins, 2007), that is, it is interested not in linguistic features, but in rhetorical practices of using language in social interactions. The main task of discursive psychology is to analyze how effectively people, who are both products and creators of discourses, use these discourses in discussing their views of the world, and what are the social consequences of such use for creating and changing the socio-cultural context (Hepburn & Potter, 2003). One of the priorities of discursive psychology is that the research conducted in its mainstream is based on materials produced in natural, unconstrained conditions. In this context, social networks are the most suitable environment for conducting research. In this context, social networks are the most ideal environment to conduct research. According to Dixon (1980), a proponent of the “pure” approach, only spontaneous texts have to be collected, so the study was conducted on the social network. To conduct this study, we have chosen the social network Facebook. This is explained by several reasons. Firstly, the social network Facebook is very popular in Ukraine, its audience is people with a wide variety of interests, which enables the study to cover different social strata of the population. Second, the profiles of Facebook users are much more informative than on other social networks. They contain a profile image, personal information, photos and albums, as well as a timeline of messages and updates. This makes it possible to assert that the study complied with the requirements of representativeness of the studied audience in terms of Ukrainian nationality. Humor patterns were picked in the groups with Ukrainian context “Jokes in Ukrainian” (1.2 million participants; URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/782821332556472>), “Ukrainian humor” (118.1 thousand participants; URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/887796599077621>), “Inspirations, quotes, thoughts in Ukrainian” (128.6 thousand participants; URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/655994877875713>), “Entice me in Ukrainian (humor, quotes, stories)” (203.0 thousand participants; URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/spokusaukr>); “On the positive” (913.2 thousand participants; URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/376314733250163>) in the period from the beginning of April to the end of December 2022. These are open

groups – anyone can find these groups, and anyone can view group members and their posts. During this period, 1,536 original posts, the conceptual content of which was humor were shared in these groups. The recurring posts were not considered. However, Heintz and Ruch (2015) argue that when contextual features that influence humor production (social and political environment, intentions, mood, etc.) are ignored, the relationship of humor styles to psychological well-being/sustainability is negated. Therefore, we selected 302 posts, in which there are references to facts directly related to the war in Ukraine, that is, there is a situational context/presupposition. Addressing the situational context helps to more accurately interpret the meaning of humorous utterances. Since the presentation of the results of this study is sensible on a quantitative parameter, we also used a statistical method of research.

The author of this paper translated the examples of humor that are given in the article.

Results

The results of the study were summarized in a table outlining the characteristics of humor during a particular time period.

Table 1

Characteristics of humor presented in the Ukrainian sector of the social network Facebook during the Russian-Ukrainian war (March – December 2022)

The time interval	Characteristics of humor			
	purpose	prevailing style	content	linguistic features
March 2022	to reduce tensions between the Russians and the Ukrainians, resolve disagreements, and strengthen friendships	affiliative (non-confrontational)	the absurdity of the reason for the outbreak of war and the rupture of friendly relations between the countries	avoidance of negative evaluations and accusation
April-May 2022	to build a collective identity	aggressive	the difficulties of the Russians in pronouncing certain phonemes typical for the Ukrainian language	demonstration of hostility through sarcasm

June-September 2022	1) to reduce emotional stress and improve psychological well-being; 2) to belittle the enemy and express confrontation and disdain	1) aggressive; 2) disparagement	1) conceptualization of death; 2) the expression a low opinion of the enemy, the demonstration of its insignificance	1) the use of iconic “likenesses” of death, playing with its artificial models; 2) the use of verbal insults
September - December 2022	1) to build resiliency and relieve psychological distress; 2) to increase self-esteem	1) self-enhancing; 2) self-defeating	1) positive reframing of negative events; 2) demonstration an ability to keep calm and carry on when faced with stressful situations	optimistic orientation

The first month of Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine (March 2022) was characterized by low activity regarding the humor production in the Ukrainian sector of social networks. This fact can be explained from the perspective of the Ukrainian population’s psychological state of confusion and panic, as well as the process of migration to safer parts of the country or to other countries where access to the Internet was impossible or complicated. However, the infrequent humor patterns posted on the social network indicated that affiliative humor (87%) associated with a non-confrontational type of conflict management strategies was prevalent during the first month of the war. Ukrainians turned to such humor forms as banter and good-humored teasing to reduce tensions, resolve disagreements, and strengthen friendships. The humor content was the absurdity of the reason for the outbreak of war and the rupture of friendly relations between the countries:

We are Ukrainian war pigeons. And we start dirty bombing;
Photo fact! The very same sparrows from the Ukrainian biolaboratories that smoke in the warehouses in Crimea!;
If Gerasim had not drowned Mumu, in six hours she would have attacked the baroness from four positions (I will show the map now) (FB);
“You’re fascist and member of Stepan Bandera movement!” – “I know! The whole our synagogue is like that.” (Inspirations, quotes, thoughts in Ukrainian. Facebook. 19.03.2022. URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/655994877875713>).

The linguistic characteristic of the humor produced in March is the avoidance of negative evaluations and accusation. This indicates that Ukrainians hoped for a speedy peaceful resolution of conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and further cooperation, so their dominant concern was “avoiding escalation of emotions and saving face” (Smith et al., 2000). These humor patterns were positively related to smoothing and compromise, when in order to convey their point of view to the interlocutor, the author of a humorous statement (joke) did it in a manner that did not hurt the feelings of other interlocutors and did not make them feel offended or defensive. The ambiguity of this humor enabled people to “save face” and increased the likelihood that they were willing to “give and take”, in other words, to compromise (Smith et al., 2000).

By the end of March 2022, affiliative humor was no longer relevant. In our opinion, the reason for this was that users of the Ukrainian sector of the social network had come to believe that, in general, humor had little impact on the beliefs and attitudes of the opponent (Walter et al., 2018). Furthermore, the production of humor was strongly influenced by the revelation of the facts of Russian war crimes against civilians in Bucha and Irpen, resulting in a great emotional response among Ukrainians.

April-May 2022 was characterized by the prevalence of an aggressive humor style (81%) with such characteristics as hostility and sarcasm. This finding is consistent with those of Fritz (Fritz, 2017; 2020), who argues that due to stress buffering effects, aggressive humor under conditions of high stress can paradoxically provide some protection against distress, and “high aggressive humor users experienced less psychological distress than did low aggressive humor users” (Fritz, 2020). Ukrainians turned to aggressive humor as a last resort to defend their beliefs on social media. Moreover, the aggressive humor style between April and May 2022 was actively involved in the process of collective identity formation, which “included both creating a sense of solidarity or “who we are” and, as a necessary corollary, a sense of otherness or “who we are not” (Fominaya, 2007):

Rashists are furious: it turns out that looted in Ukraine automatic washing machines work only if there is a running water in the apartment! (FB);

As a child, I always wanted to know what happened next in the Russian fairy tale after Ivan the Fool became king. I have found out... (FB).

As can be seen from these examples, collective identity formation was based on cognitive constructs.

In the period April-May 2022 an important role “in generating a sense of common identification and solidarity, defining and critiquing the “opposition”, integrating new and marginal group members, releasing tension and negotiating conflict, and expressing an alternative opposing political identity” (Fominaya, 2007) was played by derision of linguistic differences and, in particular, the difficulties of the Russians in pronouncing certain phonemes typical for the Ukrainian language:

“Are you an invader?” – “No.” – “Tell me `ukrzaliznytsia vezla palianytsi`.” – “Yes, I am invader.”
The password for tomorrow: “lysytsia zila palianytsiu.” Response: “tse – nisenitnytsia.” (FB).

Between June and August 2022, an aggressive humor style was still relevant in the Ukrainian social media sector (77%). Aggressive humor style continued to be involved in the process of collective identity formation based on the conceptualization “who we are”/“who we are not”:

Zaluzhny threw a grenade and killed 50,000 Muscovites. And then the grenade exploded;
A rocket landed on a distillery in Kursk. It seems that our army is also attacking decision-making centers in Russia;
It's me, mailman Putin, who brought cargo 200 – your boy. But I will not give him to you, because there are no casualties in the Russian army;
“Hello, Mom, I'm a prisoner of war in Ukraine...” – “Who is this?” – “Mom, it's me, your son.” – “Excuse me, sir, but they said on TV that I have a daughter. Don't call again.” (FB).

In addition, the aggressive humor style not only was engaged in the collective identity formation, but also contributed to the process of improving of the Ukrainians' psychological well-being. This was accomplished in several ways. First, users of social networks in order to protect their psyche from the devastating effects of a traumatic situation, restore the functional state of the body and reduce emotional stress turned to such a form of aggressive humor as black humor (29%), which actualized the theme of death and issues related to it. A tendency to use black humor was related to emotional states such as confusion in the face of danger; anxiety caused by uncertainty; helplessness, that is, in which the basic emotion was fear (Khraban & Khraban, 2019; Khraban & Stepanenko, 2020). Black humor provided a perfect balance of both the cognitive and emotional demands of the wartime situation for the conceptualization of death. At the cognitive level, the use of iconic “likenesses” of death, playing with its artificial models (images of death situations or their verbal descriptions) enabled a person to handle the fear of death (Willinger et al., 2017). On an emotional level, simulation of situation models, in which it was the very enemy who came into contact with death, contributed to the emotional ventilation of the negative emotion of anger, and, thus, to the elimination or reducing of emotional distress:

The funeral services company states that it has no desire to leave the Russian market: “We will be with you to the end!”;
“Thanks to Putin's incredibly successful foreign policy, we are going to always have full refrigerators!” – the director of the Rostov morgue stated
In Russia, supermarket cashiers were prohibited to ask 18 to 65-year-olds men: “Do you need a bag?”;
You know, my friends, what is the only thing from my Soviet childhood that I genuinely miss? And I would like to see it again? A GORGEOUS, LUXURY KREMLIN FUNERAL (FB).

Second, social media users widely practiced disparagement humor (21%) as another form of aggressive humor style that could uniquely belittle a given target (e.g., individuals, social groups, political ideologies, material possessions) and simultaneously express confrontation and disdain (Ferguson & Ford, 2008). Gruner notes: “When we find humor in something, we laugh at the misfortune, stupidity, clumsiness, moral or cultural defect, suddenly revealed in someone else, to whom we instantly and momentarily feel “superior” since we are not, at that moment, unfortunate, stupid, clumsy, morally or culturally defective and so on. To feel superior in this way is “to feel good”; it is to “get what you want.” It is to win!” (Gruner, 1997). Disparagement humor enabled to maintain a positive attitude and contributed to the development of optimism, that was, it formed “the generalized, relatively stable tendency to expect good outcomes across important life domains” (Scheier & Carver, 2018). In the period June-August 2022 this worked through the expression a low opinion of the enemy, the demonstration of his insignificance:

“The Russian army is not powerful. It is long.” – this phrase is going to be included in the textbooks of military history;

The greatest army in the world could have turned America into nuclear ash, but did not have time because it was whipping in a hamlet in the Sumy Oblast;

“Valeriy, what do you think our Armed Forces need to defeat the Russian army?” – “Well... First, to catch up with them.” (FB),

as well as through the downward reassessment of threat objects:

The first unmanned aerial vehicle I had ever seen was a slipper that my grandfather Mykola launched at me after I had smoked his packet of cigarettes (FB).

Beginning from September 2022 the proportion of the aggressive humor style in the Ukrainian sector of the social network began to decline, and the period September-December 2022 was generally characterized by the predominance of the self-enhancing style of humor (64%). The main stressful context that prompted the production of the self-enhancing style of humor was the consequences of the systematical shelling of the Ukrainian energy infrastructure, when millions of Ukrainians were left without light, heating and water:

Now it is very easy to choose a birthday present: a power bank, a flashlight or a lamp. For the anniversary it is a generator;

I propose to exchange the generator for an apartment;

“Sweetheart, you’ve lost so much weight, you’ve become so shapely, have you gone on a diet?” – “Oh, no, my husband has bought a generator with pedals.” (FB).

An effective mechanism for people to change their perspective on a stressful situation, to view it as a positive challenge rather than a negative threat (Cann & Collette, 2014; Dozois et al., 2009; Rnic, Dozois, & Martin, 2016; Kuiper & McHale, 2009) was positive reframing of negative events:

None of the time management courses will teach you how to plan your time like the National Energy Company does;
New challenging quest is “manage to shop in the supermarket between air raid and electric power outage.” (FB).

During this period the functions of the self-enhancing humor style were reduction in the perception of the severity of the harmful situation, building resiliency and relieving psychological distress.

Regarding the production of humor, the distinctive feature of the period September-December 2022 was the occurrence of self-defeating humor, which had not been in demand during previous periods:

The light was cut off, it became dark in the house. I opened the closet in the dark, bumped my forehead against the corner of the door. I felt something warm on my forehead, I believed it was blood. I decided to disinfect it with rubbing alcohol. I got to the medicine cabinet, groped for a bottle of antiseptic, opened it, poured a full palm, rubbed it on my forehead, smelled the palm with the remnants of rubbing alcohol, tasted it on my tongue – it was disgusting. The other hand was also in rubbing alcohol – I scratched my ear with it and wiped my hand on my underwear. The light came on... What devil came up with the idea of antiseptic Brilliant Green? (FB).

The function of self-defeating humor in this example is to strengthen a sense of community (belonging to a group) and identification through the demonstration of experiencing a common stressful situation, as well as to increase self-esteem by demonstrating an ability to keep calm and carry on when faced with stressful situations.

The main distinguishing feature of the humor of September-December 2022 period was its optimistic orientation, that was the faith in the Ukrainian people and the imminent victory of Ukraine:

So many things have happened this year that I will not be surprised if I get married;
“You say we have to end the war by spring?” – “Yes, because then we are going to plant the seedlings.”
Maybe the purpose of the blackout is to prevent the General Staff’s plans for a counteroffensive from being leaked in a Telegram? When the lights come back on, we’ll see that Crimea is already ours. And everyone is like, Wow!));
Horoscope for 2023! We will withstand! And we will win! Peace will come! This is true for all Zodiac signs! (FB).

Thus, a radical change in the preferences of Ukrainians in humor styles so far indicates that the stressful situation has begun to be seen as controlled and manageable, that is, there have been positive changes in the process of adaptation to the psychotraumatic situation and experiences; complete or partial restoring of the psychological stability of the population.

Limitations of the Study

Since the study was conducted on Facebook, it can be argued that the focus was mainly on the age group 35+, which is dominant on this social media. Therefore, the main limitation of the study is related to the validity of the study results applicability to other age segments of society.

Conclusions

Analysis of the preferences in humor styles typical for the Ukrainian audience of social network in different periods of wartime stressful situation has enabled us to come to the following conclusions:

- the preferences in humor styles is directly influenced not only by contextual factors and the duration of the stressor, but by the audience's psycho-emotional state and its intentions. This validates the fact that while the situation in the country is basically the same during the period March-September 2022, the preference in humor styles varies greatly;

- aggressive humor style is especially in demand in the period of adaptation to the traumatic event, but the audience can use its various forms depending on their effectiveness for a particular purpose. Thus, black humor proved to be productive for emotional venting of negative emotion of anger and reducing of emotional distress; disparagement humor proved to be effective for formation of collective identity and increasing of optimism;

- self-enhancing humor style can serve as a sign of positive shifts in the process of adaptation to a psychologically traumatic situation, and restoration of the population's psychological stability;

- self-defeating humor style is actualized in wartime as a form of adaptive humor, since it promotes a sense of community (belonging to a group) and identification through the experience of a shared stressful situation; and also positively correlates with self-esteem as a result of an individual's demonstration of his/her ability to maintain self-control in whatever situation.

The understanding of the preferences in humor styles presented in this paper can provide a framework for expanding our knowledge of the subjective dimensions of the war related stress experience and the psychological resources for resilience to psychological stress. This can increase the potential for psychosocial support and rehabilitation for war-affected populations.

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