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### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR STUDYING THE SENSE OF HUMOR IN DIFFERENT PERSONALITY TYPES**

*The article delineates theoretical approaches to studying the phenomenon of humor as a multifaceted psychological category. It analyzes the relationship between individual psychological characteristics of a person and the specifics of their humorous perception, generation, and preferences. Particular attention is paid to the main psychological theories of humor (relief theory, superiority theory, incongruity theory, integrative theory), as well as their connection with dispositional traits within the “Big Five” personality model and psychotypes. The article emphasizes that humor is not merely entertainment but a complex cognitive, affective, and social phenomenon determined by an individual's personality organization. The theoretical analysis concludes that personality type is a significant predictor of humor style, which has practical implications for clinical psychology, pedagogy, and personnel management.*

*Keywords: sense of humor, personality type, personality traits, Big Five, humor theories, humor styles, humor as coping, individual differences.*

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### **ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ЧУВСТВА ЮМОРА У РАЗЛИЧНЫХ ТИПОВ ЛИЧНОСТИ**

*В статье рассматриваются теоретические подходы к изучению феномена юмора как многогранной психологической категории. Анализируется взаимосвязь между индивидуально-психологическими особенностями личности и спецификой ее юмористического восприятия, генерации и предпочтений. Особое внимание уделяется основным психологическим теориям юмора (теория рельефа, теория превосходства, теория несоответствия, интегративная теория), а также их связи с диспозиционными чертами в рамках моделей личности «Большая пятерка» (Big Five) и психотипов. Статья подчеркивает, что юмор является не просто развлечением, а сложным когнитивным, аффективным и социальным феноменом, детерминированным личностной организацией индивида. Теоретический анализ позволяет заключить, что тип личности выступает значимым предиктором стиля юмора, что имеет практическое значение для клинической психологии, педагогики и управления персоналом.*

*Ключевые слова: чувство юмора, тип личности, черты личности, Большая пятерка, теории юмора, стили юмора, юмор как копинг, индивидуальные различия.*

A sense of humor is traditionally considered one of the most valuable and attractive human characteristics. It facilitates social interaction, mitigates conflicts, promotes psychological well-being, and serves as an effective mechanism of psychological defense. However, despite its apparent universality, humor manifests itself with great variability. What seems funny to one person may be incomprehensible or offensive to another. This variability is largely determined by individual psychological characteristics, that is, personality type. Investigating the theoretical foundations of this relationship allows for a deeper understanding of the nature of both humor and personality itself, revealing the mechanisms behind our comedic preferences and behavior. Therefore, the aim of this article is to systematize key theoretical approaches to researching the sense of humor and analyze its relationship with various personality types.

Psychological science distinguishes four classical theories explaining its nature:

1 *Superiority Theory*, dating back to the works of Aristotle, Plato, and T. Hobbes, posits that humor arises from a feeling of superiority over other people, their weaknesses, or failures. Laughter here is an expression of triumph and self-importance [1]. In the context of personality, this theory suggests that individuals with narcissistic traits, high competitiveness, and possibly elevated levels of aggression will be more inclined to use humor as a tool for self-elevation and humiliation of others. Such humor often serves as an instrument of social dominance and reinforcement of group boundaries through ridicule of “outsiders”. As noted by V.P. Sheinov, this principle underlies many techniques of using humor for influence, where a joke allows one to “attack an opponent, present them in an unfavorable light, while remaining within socially acceptable behavior” [2, p. 45].

2 *Relief Theory*, developed within the psychoanalytic framework by S. Freud, interprets humor as a mechanism for discharging psychic energy. According to Freud, humor allows for the expression of forbidden, most often sexual and aggressive, impulses in a socially acceptable form, thereby relieving psychological tension [3]. From this perspective, individual differences in humor use will be related to the strength of repressed drives and the effectiveness of psychological defenses. Individuals with high levels of internal anxiety may use humor as a primary coping mechanism for sublimating internal conflicts. Empirical research conducted within this framework, particularly the work of S.N. Enikolopov, has confirmed that humor indeed serves as an effective channel for discharging mental tension associated with aggressive impulses.

3 *Incongruity Theory*, the most popular in cognitive psychology and associated with the names of I. Kant and A. Schopenhauer, explains humor as the result of a clash between two incompatible concepts or expectations. The unexpected punchline of a joke, a pun, irony – all these are examples of resolving cognitive incongruity, which evokes laughter [4]. This theory places cognitive abilities at the forefront: to understand a joke, one needs to create an expectation and then experience its refutation. Consequently, more developed cognitive abilities and flexibility of thinking, characteristic of open-to-experience individuals, will correlate with understanding and preference for complex forms of humor based on incongruity.

4 *Integrative Approach: Benign Violation Theory* – a modern theory proposed by P. McGraw and colleagues, integrates previous approaches. According to it, humor arises when a situation is simultaneously perceived as a “violation” (of norms, expectations, physical safety) and as “benign” (safe) [5]. That is, something must be threatening but ultimately turn out to be unserious. This approach explains why the same person reacts differently to a joke in different contexts: it all depends on whether they perceive the violation as safe for themselves. Personality traits such as neuroticism (determining sensitivity to threats) and openness to experience (determining readiness for non-standard interpretations) are key moderators here.

The five-factor model (Big Five) has proven most fruitful for empirical research into the link between humor and personality. Numerous studies have revealed stable correlations between the traits of this model and various aspects of humor, as confirmed by meta-analyses [6]:

– *extraversion* demonstrates the strongest and most positive link with a sense of humor. Extroverts more often use humor in social contexts, are more inclined to generate it, value humor as a tool for building connections, and more frequently resort to affiliative humor (aimed at strengthening relationships). Their humor is typically louder, more expansive, and spontaneous, corresponding to their general orientation towards the external world and social reward;

– *agreeableness*. High scores in agreeableness are associated with the use of constructive and prosocial humor styles. Such individuals avoid self-defeating and, especially, aggressive humor aimed at humiliating others. Their jokes are more often good-natured and supportive, strengthening group cohesion. Low agreeableness, on the contrary, is a reliable predictor of using sarcasm, irony, and humor related to disparaging others, which, according to V.P. Sheinov, is a sign of a tendency towards manipulative influence, as “aggressive humor allows one to strike blows while maintaining a mask of benevolence” [2, p. 78];

– *neuroticism* (emotional instability) demonstrates a complex and mainly negative relationship with humor. High neuroticism is associated with difficulties in using humor as an effective coping mechanism. Such individuals more often resort to self-defeating humor (self-deprecating jokes), which reflects low self-esteem and internal distress. They may also be more sensitive to aggressive humor directed at them and less adept at understanding jokes under stress, as their cognitive resources are blocked by anxiety;

– *openness to experience*. This trait directly correlates with the cognitive complexity of humor. Individuals with high openness prefer intellectual, absurd, ironic, and unconventional humor based on incongruity theory. They not only better understand complex jokes but are also inclined to create them. Simple and predictable humor may bore them. Openness to experience allows them to perceive unexpected “violations” of norms and logic as “benign” and, consequently, funny;

– *conscientiousness*. The link between conscientiousness and humor is weaker. Some research shows that conscientious people may be more selective in using humor, avoiding risky or socially unacceptable jokes that could disrupt social order or harm reputation. Their humor is often more structured and appropriate, reflecting their general tendency towards order and responsibility.

Developing ideas about the connection between humor and personality, R. Martin and colleagues proposed a model of “humor styles”, which describes how people regularly use humor in daily life [7]. Four main styles are distinguished, clearly correlated with personality traits:

– *affiliative humor*: inoffensive jokes for strengthening social bonds. Positively correlates with extraversion and agreeableness, negatively with neuroticism. This style is the basis for building trust and sympathy, which, according to V. P. Sheinov, creates fertile ground for non-manipulative, positive influence [2, p. 112];

– *self-enhancing humor*: an optimistic outlook on life, using humor for emotion regulation and coping with stress. Negatively associated with neuroticism and positively with psychological well-being, resilience, and openness to experience. Such humor increases personal effectiveness and charisma, making a person more attractive to followers;

– *aggressive humor*: satire, sarcasm, humor aimed at criticizing and manipulating others. Negatively associated with agreeableness, positively with hostility and traits of the “Dark Triad” (Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy). This style directly echoes the techniques described by V. P. Sheinov for using humor as a weapon in the struggle for power, allowing one to “under the guise of a joke, promote one’s ideas, weaken opponents, and manipulate group sentiments” [2, p. 56]. Studying aggressive humor from the perspective of

the psychology of aggression, as done by S.N. Enikolopov, shows that it not only serves as a tool for manipulation but can also be an indicator of unexpressed negative emotions and specific personality traits [8];

– *self-defeating humor*: self-deprecating jokes made at the expense of one’s self to gain approval from others. Positively correlates with neuroticism, depression, low self-esteem, and is a maladaptive coping strategy. People using this style easily fall under the influence of others, as their humor demonstrates low status and self-doubt.

This model clearly demonstrates that humor can be both adaptive (affiliative and self-enhancing) and maladaptive (aggressive and self-defeating), and its orientation directly stems from the individual’s personality structure.

S. N. Enikolopov added a clinical-psychological and psychohygienic perspective, emphasizing the role of humor in mechanisms of psychological defense and adaptation, which complements R. Martin’s social-personal approach [9].

Empirical study of the link between humor and personality requires valid and reliable tools. To date, a number of specialized questionnaires have been developed, having undergone repeated psychometric testing:

– *Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ)*, developed by R. Martin and colleagues, is the “gold standard” in this field [10]. It consists of 32 statements measuring four humor styles (8 items per style). The questionnaire has been translated into many languages, including Russian, and is widely used for predicting psychological well-being, quality of social relationships, and identifying maladaptive behavior patterns;

– *Situational Humor Response Questionnaire (SHRQ)*, created by H. Lefcourt, focuses on measuring the frequency and ease of laughter response in everyday life situations [11]. Unlike the HSQ, it measures not styles but rather the general “sensitivity” to humor as a reaction to a wide range of events. It positively correlates with extraversion and self-enhancing humor;

– *Coping Humor Scale (CHS)*, also developed by H. Lefcourt, consists of 7 items assessing the extent to which a person consciously uses humor as a strategy for coping with stress [11]. It is closely related to the self-enhancing humor style and is a good predictor of psychological resilience;

– *COMIC questionnaire*, proposed by W. Ruch and colleagues, is designed to assess five main dimensions of humor perception: comicality, oddness, mundanity, intellectual appeal, and content appeal. It allows for a deeper understanding of which specific aspects of a joke resonate with a person of a particular personality type, for example, how openness to experience is related to a preference for “odd” humor [12].

Applying these tools in conjunction with personality trait tests (such as NEO-PI-R, based on the “Big Five” model) allows for obtaining relevant and statistically significant data on the deep-seated connection between personality structure and its humor profile.

Thus, theoretical analysis allows us to conclude that there is a deep and multifaceted connection between the sense of humor and personality type. Classical humor theories (superiority, relief, incongruity) and modern integrative models are reflected in empirically established correlations between dispositional traits (within the “Big Five” model) and specific styles of humorous activity, diagnosed using specialized questionnaires.

For instance, extroverts and agreeable individuals are inclined towards prosocial forms of humor, while neurotics are inclined towards self-defeating ones. Open-to-experience individuals prefer complex, cognitively rich humor, while those with low agreeableness and high narcissism prefer aggressive and nihilistic humor, which, as rightly noted by V. P. Sheinov, can serve as a tool for manipulation and covert control [2]. The availability of valid diagnostic tools, such as the HSQ, allows not only for stating these connections but also for applying the acquired knowledge in practice.

Understanding these patterns has important practical significance. In psychotherapy, it can help correct maladaptive coping strategies and develop healthy self-enhancing humor; in pedagogy – in developing differentiated teaching methods considering individual student characteristics; in organizational psychology – in forming a healthy socio-psychological climate in teams and personnel selection. Thus, the sense of humor ceases to be merely a subject of everyday observation, transforming into a serious scientific construct that reveals the uniqueness of human personality and opens paths for targeted positive influence.

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