



COPING STRATEGIES OF COLLEGE-GOING STUDENTS IN PONDICHERY UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this research was to look at the coping strategies used by university students. Furthermore, a substantial effort was made to investigate the gender variations in the students' coping techniques. This research was carried out at Pondicherry University in Pondicherry, on first-year integrated PG students of university studying in either of the sections (Bachelor of Arts, Science, or Commerce). The random sampling approach was used to acquire 60 samples from the study population of university students. The sample consisted of 20 students from each of the three groups: Arts, Science, and Commerce, with both sexes, represented well. The tools such as a socio-demographic datasheet and coping checklist were used. The study findings revealed that most of the students adopted emotion- and problem-focused coping strategies. Most female students adopted emotion-focused coping strategies, whereas males primarily used problem-focused coping strategies.

Keywords: Coping strategies, University students, Gender, Adaptive behaviour, Maladaptive behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Today, education is seen as an industry for the development of human resources from many fields of life. The student population is the heart of the education system, and they are the ones who are most impacted by the system's strengths and faults. When contrasted to the rest of society, the students constitute an identical grouping. Some of the most prevalent concerns that a college student faces include psychological, emotional, social, intellectual, and professional difficulties.

The majority of college students endeavour and try to deal with stress in a constructive manner. Some youngsters, on the other hand, do not know how to deal with their difficulties and, as a result, resort to harmful coping mechanisms. As a result, the characteristics of coping behaviour should be researched from a developmental standpoint. Coping may take the form of emotional, cognitive, or social support seeking. By the age of two or three years, emotional responsiveness has developed from basic reflexes to planful emotional responsive behaviour. Visual or physical avoidance, distraction, self-soothing, problem-solving, and care-eliciting are the five categories of behaviour identified by Kopp (1989).

College students are one group that is subjected to pressures that might have a harmful impact on their mental health (Beeber, 1999; Edwards, Herschberger, Russel, & Markert, 2001; Goldman & Wong, 1997). The transition to college and the college experience in general, which includes time restrictions (e.g., Nonis, Hudson, Logan, & Ford, 1998), financial challenges, academic overload, and interpersonal difficulties, is a stressful time in the lives of

young people (e.g., Rocha-Singh, 1994). Deckro, Ballinger, Hoyt, Wilcher, Dusek, Myers, et al. (2002), for example, surveyed stress levels in a sample of college students prior to a stress reduction intervention and discovered that more than two-thirds (69%) reported having "excessive levels of stress," while 62 percent viewed themselves as "more anxious than most people." In addition, Deckro et al. (2002) discovered that insomnia, a sleep disruption often related with stress, was a problem for almost one-third (31%) of the undergraduates in their group.

According to the literature, students in higher education who fail to adapt to the stressful expectations imposed on them may have a range of issues and may be at risk of developing mental disease (e.g., Beeber, 1999; Deckro et al., 2002; Nonis et al., 1998; Rocha- Singh, 1994). According to a countrywide poll conducted by the American College Health Association in 2004, approximately 15% of students reported receiving a diagnosis of depression at some point in their lives. In 2000, the reported prevalence rate of depression was 10% of this group, showing that depression is on the rise on our college campuses. Similarly, Heiligenstein, Guenther, and Hsu (1996) found that 92 percent of college students who were classified as slightly to moderately depressed exhibited indications of academic impairment. Furthermore, a recent study of college students' mental health found that 53% had suffered substantial depressive symptoms since starting college, and 9% had pondered suicide (Furr, Westefeld, McConnell, & Jenkins, 2001). The fact that just a small percentage (17%) of students who reported symptoms of depression in college sought therapy is quite concerning (Furr et al., 2001). Furthermore, just 20% of students who had a history of suicide thoughts used their institution's free counselling programme (Furr et al., 2001). In the case of college students, stress-related mental health issues may lead to self-defeating behaviour, worse grades, dropping out, and interpersonal difficulties (Deckro et al., 1994).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Objectives

1. To get an understanding of the socio-demographic characteristics of students
2. To investigate the students' interpersonal relationships as well as their academic achievements.
3. To get an understanding of the many coping strategies used by college students.

Research Design

The present study was conducted using a descriptive research approach, according to the researcher. The design highlights the socioeconomic condition of college students, as well as the numerous adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms that they use to cope with their circumstances.

Sampling

The participants were pursuing first year integrated post graduate courses like Chemistry, Earth Science, Economics, Geology, Physics, Politics, Sociology and History. The overall population of first year integrated student is almost 150 in that researcher selected 40% populations as sample that is 60 respondents. It includes 30 girls and 30 boys and 20 students from each group of Arts, Science, and Commerce.

Tools of data collection

Semi-structured questionnaires for studying socio-demographic details are used in the investigation process, which include personal data such as name, age, education, occupation, and family background, the economic status of the respondent, the relationship of the respondents

towards family members, the influence of social networking system among the respondents, and questions about academic performance of the respondents. A coping checklist with 28 different coping patterns was also used (Brief Cope (Carver, C. S. (1997)). The Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997) is a simplified form of the COPE Inventory. Brief COPE consists of 28 tasks that evoke 14 distinct coping mechanisms. The 28 items are graded on a scale of 0 to 3, with 3 being the highest. There is no overall score on this scale, and the authors do not advocate any specific method for establishing a dominant coping style for a given person. It is also proposed that each scale be examined independently to determine its relationship to other factors. Another option is to generate second-order factors from the scales and use the factors as predictors. The items were evaluated in a distinct style and indicated a wide variety of behavioural, emotional, and cognitive responses to stress. Frequency and percentage were used to determine the difference between the means of two groups (male and female).

Statistical Analysis

The analysis was carried out with the help of the 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (SPSS) programme. The information was coded and arranged in a table. Presented in the form of tables, charts, and diagrams, together with explanations, the relevant information is provided.

Ethical Issues

The questionnaire was circulated with the informed consent of the respondents and the authority of the institute. The purpose and the outcome of the study explained to the respondents and those who are willing to participate in the study were included. Anonymity of the respondents and the strict confidentiality with regard to all information collected are maintained and researcher assured that the information will use only for the research purpose.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic profile of university students shows that most of the respondents were day scholars (60%) coming from various parts of Tamilnadu and Union Territory of Puducherry. The majority of the students were in the age between 17 and 19 (80%) so, this indicate the majority of them are in late adolescence. With regard to their location from where they are coming Most of the respondents were coming from urban community (63.3%). it is observed that majority of belonging to the Hindu religion (63.3%) and belonging to general category (46%). It was observed that 90% of parents were having an intimate relationship among them and most of them they are coming from nuclear family (76.6%).

Coping mechanisms adopted by the university students shows that, a majority of the student (63.3%) showed high levels of adaptive coping strategies during the study time, it is a positive factor to hear about late adolescence. Among 33.3% of the respondent observed that they were adapting the average level of coping strategies. Regarding maladaptive coping of university students most of the respondents (86.7%) showed average levels of coping strategies. It shows that they are not in a risk group until they adopt high maladaptive coping strategies. Among the population 13.3% showed low maladapting coping behavior. While comparing the adaptive coping strategies in between boys and girls the researcher could not find much difference. In the case of maladaptive coping behavior among boys and girls researcher noticed a slight variation. Almost 90% of the boys adopted average coping strategies, in case of girls it was 80% and remaining 20% respondent adopted low coping strategies. From boys only 10% showed low maladaptive coping strategies. While considering adaptive coping strategies among rural and urban respondent, there is a marked variation, 50% students residing urban showing high adaptive coping skills. In the case of students residing in rural community 95% of respondent showing that they are adopting a high level of adaptive coping strategies. While analyzing

maladaptive coping strategies among rural and urban respondents, researcher couldn't find any variation. None of the respondent coming from rural or urban community adopted high level maladaptive coping pattern. Most of the respondents coming from rural or urban community showed average levels of coping patterns. While analyzing coping strategies among respondent residing in nuclear or joint family system researcher have seen a marked variation that from joint family background 100% students showing high level of adaptive coping strategies and among the nuclear 60% showing high level of coping and 40% showing average level adaptive coping.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted at Pondicherry University, Puducherry, on the first year integrated students of university studying in either of the branches Bachelor of Arts, Science, or Commerce. The objective of this study was to examine the coping patterns followed by the first year integrated students. Further, an extensive effort was done to study the gender differences in coping patterns used by the students. A total of 30 samples was collected from a study population of first year integrated students, including both of the sexes, using the random sampling method. The tools such as, socio-demographic data sheet and coping checklist, were used. The study findings revealed that majority of the students adopted high adaptive coping strategies. In the case of maladaptive coping strategies most of the students adopted average level of maladaptive coping strategies, while comparing the male and female students coping strategies there was no significant difference noticed. Whereas from the case of students residing in the nuclear or joint type of family noticed that most of the students from joint family showed high level of coping strategies. The study of socio-demographic details and coping strategies of college gave a lot of scope to researcher to practice in the field of social work. The research got a good picture about college student's problem solving capacity as well as coping strategies.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Most of the respondents were belonging to the age group of 17-21. It represents the late adolescent, the risk of adopting some maladaptive coping like cigarette smoking and experimentation with drugs and alcohol is very high during this time, so the late adolescent need special care and awareness about adopting. Girls in late adolescence tend to be at greater risk than boys of negative health outcomes, including depression, and these risks are often magnified by gender-based discrimination and abuse. Providing Mental Health Support for the Students There are many agencies that play a role in the provision of mental health care to students. Higher education institutions offer services such as counselling and other forms of support to students with mental health problems. The university or college is seen not only as a place of education but also as a resource for promoting health and well-being in students, staff and the wider community. It has long been appreciated that settings such as schools and workplaces enable health promotion programmes to be implemented.

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