

PREDICTIVE ROLE OF PROBLEM FOCUSED COPING IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE

The study aims to investigate the predictive role of problem focused coping in the psychological well-being of students of Karachi University, Pakistan.

STUDY DESIGN

Correlational research design.

PLACE AND DURATION OF STUDY

Different departments of University of Karachi, Pakistan were selected by systematic random sampling during the year 2013-2014.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

A sample of 105 university students (males 51 & females 55) with the age range of 19 to 35 years (mean age= 24.85; SD=.489) belonging to different socioeconomic status was selected from university of Karachi, Pakistan. After taking permission from HODs of concerned departments, demographic information form, Coping Styles Scale and Psychological Well-Being Scale were administered on participants in the group settings.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and Multiple Regression were computed through SPSS version 14.0. Findings revealed that problem focused coping contributes 18% variance in psychological well-being of university students.

CONCLUSION

The use of problem focused coping increases the psychological well-being among university students.

KEYWORDS

Problem focused coping, psychological well-being, university Students.

INTRODUCTION

Students are considered to be a vital part of the potential human resource of any country. University time is fascinating as well as stressful. It entails taking responsibility of one's learning. Academic stress is positively correlated with depression and physical illness, both of which reduce academic performance and the likelihood of degree completion¹. The process of handling stress optimally with best available options is called coping.

Coping is a life long process of trimming down the negative feelings in response to the stressful situations. Coping styles refer to identifiable samples of behavior used to combat the stressors. Active coping styles by and large are used to alleviate the incapacitated effects of stress. On the contrary, avoidant coping styles are reflected to be less effective and beneficial; a wide variety of researches are congruent with the fact².

Psychological well being refers to an individual's personal evaluation about his/her life. There are three components of psychological well-being; life satisfaction, positive emotions and negative emotions³. Coping resources highly predict psychological wellness; moreover they act as a shield against depression and anxiety^{4,5,6}. A lot of studies have shown the efficacy of use of problem focused coping i.e. active coping, and adaptive coping in a higher degree of psychological wellbeing among students.

Earlier work on the subject has highlighted that the college students have coupled active coping strategies with better college adjustment among various racial groups^{7,8} leading to healthier psychological well-being among Latinos⁹. Additionally, it was also found that active coping predicts lower level of psychological symptoms among natives of inner city adolescents in Mexican American¹⁰.

In spite of lot of literature available on coping and psychological well-being of adolescents, medical students and clinical population, there exists a gap on the subject in Pakistan with reference to university students.

METHOD

Participants

In the present study the data was collected through systematic random sampling technique. The sample employed in the study was 105 students of University of Karachi, Pakistan. The entire sample included 51 males and 54 females. The age range of the sample was between 19 to 35 years with the mean of 24.85 years.

MEASURES

Demographic Information Form

Demographic Information consisted of variables that gathered personal information, education, and variables related to parents and family.

COPING STYLES SCALE, URDU VERSION¹¹

The Coping Styles Scale (CSS) is designed for the age group of 18 to 50 years old adults. Coping



Styles Scale is self report measure and consisting of 22 items. Each item answered on a five point Likert scale to show the extent to which the item is true for them. The score ranges from 5 "always" to 1 "not at all"¹¹. Coping Styles Scale has high alpha levels for problem focused coping i.e. (. 879) and emotion focused coping i.e. (. 890) respectively¹².

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING SCALE-URDU VERSION¹³

Psychological Well-Being Scale was originally developed by Ryff (1989) and translated and adapted in the Urdu language by Ansari (2010)^{13, 14}. PWLS consists of 54 items, a theoretically grounded instrument focusing on six dimensions of well-being; autonomy (AUT), environmental mastery (E-M), personal growth (P-G), positive relations with others (P-R), purpose in life (PIL), and self acceptance (S-A). Each dimension included 9 items; half of the items of PWLS are reversed score. The Cronbach's alpha of PWLS-Urdu is 0.85313. The Cronbach's alpha of PWLS-Urdu on current study is 0.9¹⁵.

PROCEDURE

At the start permission was taken from the chairman/chairpersons of different departments of University of Karachi. A brief introduction about the nature of study was given and the purpose was elaborated to them. Later, a proper schedule was prepared to approach students for administration of scales with the approval of each participant. After taking their consent they were requested to fill the Demographic Information Form, Coping Styles Scale-Urdu and Psychological well-being scale-Urdu. After collecting data, results were entered to SPSS and analyzed.

RESULTS

47 % university students are from joint family structure and 30 % from nuclear family structure. 35 % belongs to the Urdu speaking family, 11 % Punjabi, 5 % Sindhi, 4 % Balochi, 1 % Siraiki, 4 % Pashtu and 15 % others. 40 % were married and 37 % were unmarried. The mean number of siblings was 5 in the sample, in which 27 % had 1st birth order, 32 % 2nd birth order and 17 % were last born. The minimum qualification of the entire sample was intermediate level and maximum was Ph. D. Out of N= 105; 58 % student's both parents were not alive and 19 % student's both parents were alive (for more details of demographic characteristics of the sample see table 1 & 2).

Our findings show that there is a positive correlation between use of problem focused coping and psychological wellbeing ($p < .000^{**}$) among university students, indicating that use of problem focused coping predicts psychological well-being among university students. Moreover problem focused coping contributes 18 % variance among psychological well-being of university students (see tables; 3A, 3B, 3C).

TABLE-1

Socio demographics of the sample N= 105

Variables	Mean	Std.
Age	24.85	4.895
Education	3.47	.589
Duration in department	2.588	1.4613
No. of siblings	5.26	2.500
Monthly income	3.11	1.095

TABLE-2

Summary of findings of demographic variables

Variables	F	Percentages %
Gender	(males) 51	48.71
	(females) 54	51.42
Family structure	(joint) 64	60.95
	(nuclear) 41	39.04
Parental status	(both parents Alive) 79	75.23
	(single Parent) 26	24.76
Marital status	(married) 54	51.42
	(unmarried) 51	48.57
Mother Language	(Urdu) 48	45.71
	(Punjabi) 15	14.28
	(Sindhi) 7	6.66
	(Blochi) 6	5.71
	(Saraiki) 2	1.90
	(Pashlo) 6	5.71
	(Others) 21	20
Birth Order	(1st Born) 37	35.23
	(Middle Born) 44	41.90
	(Last Born) 24	22.85

Note: N_105

TABLE-3A

Step wise regression of Problem Focused Coping (PFC) and Psychological Well Being

R	R ²	Adj R ²
.424 ^a	.180	.172

Predictors: (Constant), Problem Focused Coping, Dependent Variable: Psychological Well Being

TABLE-3B

Problem Focused Coping (PFC) and Psychological Well-Being

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	29451.228	1	29451.228	22.588	0.00 ^a
Residual	134293.305	103	1303.818		
Total	163744.533	104			

Predictors: (Constant), Problem Focused Coping, Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

TABLE-3C

Coefficients of Problem Focused Coping & Psychological Well-Being

Model	Coefficients	T	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B			
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	(Constant) PFC	153.012 2.459	15.401 .517	9.935 4.753	.000 .000	1.433	3.485

DISCUSSION

The goal of current study was to investigate the predictive role of problem focused coping in the psychological well-being of university students. Based on the previous available literature on the constructs it was expected that "Problem Focused Coping will predict Psychological Well-Being among University Students".

Our results are consistent with the findings of a previous study which showed that problem focused coping with stress strategy predicts higher life satisfaction and subjective well-being¹⁵. A similar study in Pakistani culture also supports our findings. This study showed that individuals with high optimistic perspectives use adaptive coping strategies and avoid maladaptive coping¹⁶. Additionally, they found that optimistic adults deal their life challenges with less subjective distress. Another study also stated that academic workload positively correlated with active coping strategies and negatively correlated with active distractive and avoidance coping among university students¹⁷.

A local study has shown that optimism and coping contributes 23% variance in the life satisfaction amongst university students in Pakistan¹⁸. The underlying factors in the use of problem focused coping strategies might be that students who use problem focused coping strategies are more practical in their approach while dealing with their problems. Such students tend to confront the casual factors of stress in a rational and a logical way. A consequent reduction in day to day stress would start to gradually reflect in their enhanced psychological wellbeing.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is concluded from the findings that use of problem focused coping predicts the psychological well-being among university students. The findings of our study can be used to promote a better understanding and use of adaptive coping strategies and thus enhance their psychological wellbeing. Awareness and training in use of adaptive coping strategies for university students is therefore recommended.

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