

Coping Mechanisms as Determinants of Psychological Well Being of Adolescents

Dr. Shabana Azmi^{1*}

ABSTRACT

Background: Psychological well being is an important personality related phenomenon for which individuals strive. It makes life meaningful and purposeful. Researchers have been curious about factors which are responsible to individuals' psychological well-being. **Objective:** The aim of the present research endeavor was to explore the impact of various coping mechanisms on the psychological well being of adolescents. **Method:** For this purpose, a sample of N=150 female students was selected from colleges of Jamshedpur District. In the present study Psychological Well-Being Scale developed by Carol Ryff (1989) was used to measure students psychological well being and to assess various coping mechanisms used by students in problematic situation Cope orientation for problem experiences, an abbreviated version of A-COPE inventory developed by Patterson & McCubbin (1986) was used. In the present study co-relational design was used. The obtained data were analyzed by applying multiple regression analysis. **Results:** The results revealed that various coping strategies emerged as significant predictors of students' psychological well being. Solving family problems, Engaged in demanding activity, Seeking spiritual support, and Developing self-reliance and optimism having a positive influence on psychological wellbeing whereas those who avoid problems and try to be humorous have a low level of psychological well being. The results were interpreted and discussed in the light of the present socio-cultural milieu.

Keywords: Well being, Psychological well being, Coping mechanisms, Adolescents

Well-being has been a pervasive and extensively researched construct in psychology for the last 50 years. Throughout history, theorists have been curious about what contributes to well-being. Psychological well-being is an important personality-related phenomenon for which individuals strive. It is a subjective feeling of contentment, happiness, satisfaction with life experiences. It makes life meaningful and purposeful. A person high in psychological well-being not only carries a higher level of satisfaction, self-esteem, positive feelings, and attitudes but also manages tensions, negative thoughts, ideas, and feelings more efficiently. Researchers have been curious about factors that are responsible for individuals' psychological well-being. It is challenging to maintain this sense

¹Assistant Professor & Coordinator, Department of Psychology, Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, West Bengal, India

*Corresponding Author

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of well-being at all stages of life, particularly during student life. College students are passing through a transitional stage of physical and mental development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. This transition involves biological, social as well as psychological changes that can be a cause of conflict on the one hand, and positive personality development on the other. In the search for a unique social identity for themselves, adolescents are confused about what is right and what is wrong and the uncertainties and razor edge competition associated with his future, all combine creates immense problems for adolescents. During the first year, in particular, students are faced with numerous educational and personal stressors that can negatively impact their health and well-being (Lumley & Provenzano, 2003). The process of adjusting to a novel and often stressful academic setting, including increased pressure to succeed at unfamiliar tasks, greater academic competition, and important career decisions (Perry, 1991, 2003) can be exceedingly difficult and these situations lead to stress among them and in such situation, adolescents try to use various coping mechanisms that help them to come out from these stressful situations. It is assumed that various coping strategies used by students play a significant role in the continuance and development of psychological well-being even in a critical situation. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the various coping mechanisms that are used by students and how these mechanisms influence their psychological well-being especially for those who are in college.

In psychology, coping is expending conscious effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems, and seeking to master, minimize or tolerate stress or conflicts. The effectiveness of coping effort depends on the type of stress, particular individual, and the circumstances (Snyder, 1999). Psychological well-being on the other hand may be defined as one's emotional and cognitive evaluations of his or her own life (Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2003). Ryff (1995) defined psychological well-being as "The striving for perfection that represents the realization of one's true potential." Psychological well-being is a multi-dimensional concept as the results of factor analysis revealed that cheerfulness, optimism, playfulness, self-control, a sense of detachment, and freedom from frustration, anxiety, and loneliness are indicators of psychological well-being (Tellegen, 1979; Sinha & Verma, 1992).

Ryff (1989b, 1995) described the multidimensional model of psychological well-being which included six distinct components of positive psychological functioning. These components include positive evaluations of oneself and one's past life despite the awareness of their limitations (Self-Acceptance), a sense of continued growth and development as a person (Personal Growth), the belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful (Purpose in Life), the possession of quality relations with others (Positive Relations with others), the capacity to manage effectively one's life and the surrounding world (Environmental Mastery), and a sense of self-determination (Autonomy). Each dimension of Ryff's psychological well-being model reflects the different challenges that individuals face in their lives.

Brissette, Scheir, and Carver (2002) found that adolescents with a higher level of cognitive restructuring and optimism, exhibit improved psychological well-being and better adjustment to stressful life events. This happens as a result of their ability to generate supportive social networks and the coping strategies they use. Turashvili & Turashvili (2015) found in their investigation a very strong direct impact of coping strategies on the psychological well-being of Georgian Students. Praying and task-oriented coping have a positive effect on psychological well-being, while avoidance and emotional coping have a negative impact. Freire Ferrada, Valle, Nunez, and Vallejo (2016) observed that coping strategies- positive reappraisal, support-seeking, and planning positively related to Psychological wellbeing among University students.

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In a recent study, Gloria, Jen, Szarowski-Cox, Hidetoshi, and Tzu (2018) investigated the effect of various coping mechanisms on the level of stress and psychological well-being among individuals with chronic pain and found that although self-focused coping, relational-focused coping and, existential coping did not show any significant impact on the psychological adjustment in this study but maladjustment coping did show a significant and detrimental impact on patients with chronic pain, especially in the manifestation of depression.

In the present research endeavor, it is assumed that various coping strategies people apply to their life play a significant role in the continuance of psychological well being even in a critical situation. Hence, the present research investigation aimed to explore the impact of various coping mechanisms on the psychological well being of youths.

Objective: The prime objective of present investigation was to find out the association or influence of various coping mechanisms used by youths in a different problematic or stressful situation on their psychological wellbeing.

Hypothesis: On the basis of objective, it was hypothesized that various coping mechanisms used by students will significantly influence their psychological well being.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

In the present study co-relational design was used to find out the association or influence of coping mechanisms on psychological wellbeing.

Sample

In the present proposed study, the sample comprised N=150 female students of undergraduate who were taken from Jamshedpur District, Jharkhand. The students under study were explained the purpose of study to get their consent. Data were kept confidential and were not disclosed unless for study purposes. The subjects' age ranged from 17-years to 20-years. Reason for selecting youths as a sample was that these students are generally at peak adolescent age and they have to face lots of problems regarding their education and career.

Procedure

For the present investigation data regarding various coping mechanisms used by students during stressful situation were collected through Adolescents coping orientation for problem experiences (A-COPE) developed by Patterson & McCubbin (1986) and Carol Ryff's (1989a) Psychological Well-Being Scale, 42 items version has been used to accumulated data related to psychological well-being of youths. Then data were analyzed and interpreted in the light of the present socio-cultural context.

Instruments:

In the present study two measures were used:

1. **Carol Ryff's (1989a) Psychological Well-Being Scale**, 42 items version has been used to assess the experience of psychological well-being among youths. The scale has 42 items and six dimensions i.e., 1. Autonomy, 2. Environmental mastery, 3. Personal growth, 4. Positive relations with others, 5. Purpose in life and 6. Self-acceptance, with 7 items in each dimension. The response categories for each item are on a six-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. All the responses are added to

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get the score on psychological well-being. Responses to negatively scored items are reversed in the scoring procedure. High scores indicate high self-ratings on psychological well-being and the dimension assessed. The internal consistency coefficients were quite high (between 0.86 and 0.93) and test-retest reliability coefficients for a sub-sample of the participants over six weeks were also high (0.81 – 0.88).

2. **Adolescents coping orientation for problem experiences (A-COPE)** developed by Patterson & McCubbin (1986) was used to measure various coping mechanisms used by students in the stressful conditions. It is a 54 items standardized questionnaire utilized to identify the coping strategies adolescents find helpful in managing problems or difficult situations. Participants have to respond according to a 5 point scale: 1=never, 2=hardly, 3=sometime, 4=often, and 5=most of the time. Summing the respondents' score for each of the items derives an adolescent's coping score for the sub-scales of 1. Ventilating feeling 2. Seeking diversion, 3. Developing self-reliance and optimism, 4. Developing social support, 5. Solving the family problems, 6. Avoiding problems, 7. Seeking spiritual support, 8. Investing in close friends, 9. Seeking professional support, 10. Engaging in demand activity, 11. Being humorous, and 12. Relaxing. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to establish reliability, the reliability and validity coefficients were reported as .86 and .40 respectively. The Cronbach's alpha reliabilities for the sub-scales ranged from .50 to .76.

Statistical analysis

Given nature of the research investigation and the hypothesis of the study, Pearson's Correlation Coefficients and Multiple Regression Analysis were applied for analyzing the data and obtaining appropriate results. Both the statistical analyses were done with the help of SPSS to find out significant correlation and predictive influence of various coping mechanisms on psychological wellbeing of adolescents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 is showing the correlation coefficient between various coping mechanisms and psychological wellbeing among youths. The results (see Table1) confirmed, significant correlations between various coping strategies and psychological wellbeing. 'Ventilating feeling' and 'Being humors' were significantly negatively correlated with Psychological wellbeing, $r=-.390$, $P<.01$ and $r=-.384$, $P<.01$ respectively. Whereas, Seeking diversion, Developing self-reliance and optimism, Solving family problems, Engaging in demand activity, and Relaxing significantly positively correlated with psychological wellbeing as their Pearson's Correlation values were $r=.207$, $P<.05$; $r=.211$, $P<.05$; $r=.618$, $P<.01$; $r=.422$, $P<.01$ and $r=.400$, $P<.01$ respectively. No significant correlation was found between Psychological wellbeing with Developing social support, Avoiding Problems, Seeking spiritual support, Investing in close friends, and Seeking professional support.

Table No. 1 Pearson's correlation coefficients between various Coping mechanisms & Psychological Wellbeing

Coping mechanisms	Psychological well-being
1. Ventilating feeling	-.390**
2. Seeking diversion	.207*
3. Developing self-reliance and optimism	.211*
4. Developing social support	.030ns
5. Solving family problem	.618**

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6. Avoiding problems	-.042ns
7. Seeking spiritual support	.032ns
8. Investing in close friends	-.116ns
9. Seeking professional support	-.039ns
10. Engaging in demand activity	.422**
11. Being humorous	-.384**
12. Relaxing	.400**

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, ns = non-significant.

To identify the variables that predict a high score in Psychological wellbeing, step-wise multiple regression was performed, including all the variables viz., various coping mechanisms (Ventilating feeling, Seeking diversion, Developing self-reliance and optimism, Developing social support, Solving family problems, Avoiding problems, Seeking spiritual support, Investing in close friends, Seeking professional support, Engaging in demand activity, Being humorous, and Relaxing.), the results of which are presented in **Table- 2**. The result of step-wise regression indicated that out of these 12 coping strategies only 6 emerged as significant predictors namely Solving family problems, Engaging in demand activity, Avoiding problems, Being humorous, Seeking spiritual support, Developing self-reliance and optimism.

Table No. 2, Step-wise Multiple regression analysis for predictor variables of Psychological well-being

Predictors	R	R ²	Adjusted	SE	R ²	β	t	
p			R ²		Change			
Solve family problems	.618(a)	.382	.356	13.858	.382	.646	6.503	.000
Engaging in demand activity	.714(b)	.510	.468	12.418	.128	.344	2.893	.009
Avoiding problems	.776(c)	.602	.547	11.297	.091	-.523	-4.611	.000
Being humorous	.828(d)	.686	.626	10.082	.084	-.526	-4.829	.000
Seeking spiritual support	.864(e)	.747	.684	9.115	.061	.420	4.061	.001
Developing self reliance and optimism	.922(f)	.851	.803	7.760	.104	.537	3.633	.002

a Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-being

Table-2 is showing the Multiple correlation (R) that is found .618(a) for first predictor, .714(b) for second predictor, .776(c) for third predictor, .828(d) for fourth, .864(e) for fifth and .922(f) for sixth one. R square is the contribution of predictor variables to the criterion variable by adding the value of the previous one gradually i.e., 85.1% variance ($R^2 = .851$, $F = 18.035$, $P < .01$). R square change is the actual contribution of the predictor variable to the criterion variable separately. Hence, the magnitude of independent variables (i.e., Solving family problems, Engaging in demand activity, Avoiding problems, Being humorous, Seeking spiritual support, Developing self-reliance.), which contributed to the psychological well being came out as 38.2%, 12.8%, 9.1%, 8.4%, 6.1%, and 10.4% respectively.

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Extending the analysis standardized beta coefficient values indicate the relative importance of each significant predictor variable in predicting the criterion variable. Obtained findings revealed the fact that coping strategies such as involved more in solving family problems, engaged in demanding activity, Seeking spiritual support, and developing self-reliance and optimism having a positive influence on psychological wellbeing as their related beta value are $\beta=.646$, $P<001$; $\beta=.344$, $P<.01$; $\beta=.420$, $P<.001$; and $\beta=.537$, $P<.01$ respectively, these activities help to increase psychological wellbeing. Looking at the standardized beta coefficient (β), it appears that 'Solving family problems' -a coping strategy has relatively more strongly related to psychological well being than other significant predictors. It seems true that in adolescents especially female most of the stressors are related to family and education so solving family problems automatically reduces stress among them that leads psychological well-being. As they are actively engaged in problem-solving and ones who used problem-focused strategies and sought social and spiritual support presented lower levels of stress and associated with positive scores for psychological well-being. Similar results have been reported by other authors who relate problem-solving coping strategies with a high level of psychological well-being (Parsons, Frydenberg, & Poole 1996).

Engagements in demanding and spiritual activities help students to reduce their level of stress which positively influences psychological wellbeing. That student reliance on one's power and resources rather than others and feel optimistic effectively manage the stressful situation, it helps them to improve their psychological well-being. Whereas those who avoid problems and try to be humorous have a low level of psychological well-being as their corresponding beta value is negative $\beta=-.523$, $P<.001$ and $\beta=-.526$, $P<.001$ respectively. Carnicer and Garrido (2013) also found that cognitive and behavioral avoidance coping strategies are frequently associated with higher levels of psychological distress. Individuals find difficulties in accepting reality, and poor adaptation to the stressful situation. Adolescents who made frequent use of cognitive avoidance in dealing with their problems experienced greater difficulties in interpersonal relationships and presented higher levels of psychological distress. Cognitive and behavioral avoidance strategies (search for alternative rewards and emotional discharge) were associated with negative psychological well-being because the successful adaptation of stressful situations is very important for good psychological wellbeing. This result is also consisted of the finding of an earlier study conducted by Ukeh and Hassan (2018). Furthermore, the humor styles model assumes that how humor is used can lead to positive or negative interpersonal and intrapersonal effects. Constructive and adaptive styles of humor are more likely to have psychological benefits but maladaptive humorous styles (like, aggressive and self-defeating) tended to be predictive of greater depression and lower self-esteem (Kuiper, Grimshaw, Leite, & Kirsh, 2004; Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray & Weir, 2003) that leads poor psychological well being. Hence, the formulated alternate hypothesis was partially accepted.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The overall findings of the study lead to conclude that there are associations that exist between the different coping mechanisms used by youths in a stressful situation and their Psychological well-being. Maladaptive coping style related to poor psychological wellbeing. Therefore, proper coping strategies should be introduced to equipped students with healthy stress management and better psychological wellbeing.

Limitation of the study

In light of the pros and cons in carrying out the present piece of research investigation some suggestions are being put-forth in conducting similar research work in the future. In the

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present research, only females were included in the sample and the sample size was small, it minimizes the generality of the findings. Therefore, it is suggested that such type of study must be conducted on relatively a large sample and both male and female students must be undertaken so that the comparison could be done based on gender.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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