

Perceived Stress and Coping Styles among Mizo Adults

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ABSTRACT

The present research examined gender differences on perceived stress and coping styles and the relationship between the psychological variables. 170 participants (85 males and 85 females) from Mizoram with age ranging between 16-40 years were randomly selected. Demographic information was gathered and psychological variables were measured using a self-report test -Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, S., and Williamson, G., 1988) and Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS: Endler, N.S. and Parker, D.A., 1999). Descriptive analysis and parametric assumptions were checked, Pearson Correlation and One - Way ANOVA analysis was employed. The result revealed significant gender differences and significant relationship between the variables. Findings suggested that females depicted higher perceived stress and emotion- oriented coping style.

Keywords: *Perceived Stress, Coping, Emotion- oriented, Task- oriented, Avoidance oriented*

Perceived stress is the feelings or thoughts that an individual has about how much stress they are under at a given point in time or over a given time period. It incorporates feelings about the uncontrollability and unpredictability of one's life, how often one has to deal with irritating hassles, how much change is occurring in one's life and confidence in one's ability to deal with problems or difficulties (Phillips, 2013). Perceived stress reflects the interaction between an individual and their environment which they appraise as threatening or overwhelming their resources in a way which will affect their wellbeing (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When people are faced with stress, the stress itself calls for adjustment which is often called coping. Because stress is an inevitable part of life, how a person is able to cope with stress is important for human function (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). **Coping** is a "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141). Coping is considered to reflect a response to specific stressors rather than a pattern of an intrinsic personality trait. This model indicates that if one's appraisal is emotionally negative, responses would be to reduce the negative emotion (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The coping strategy focused on the emotion is focused on the change of the emotional reaction by using cognitive restructuring technique. These coping strategies, also called cognitive coping strategies, are used when the person considers that it is difficult to do something to change the stressful

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Received: August 10, 2021; Revision Received: October 28, 2021; Accepted: November 20, 2021

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situation, and there is no other alternative but to withstand it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1986). There are three main coping styles, they are problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidant coping. Problem-focused coping (e.g., problem engagement and positive re-interpretation and growth) involves altering or managing the problem that causes the stress and is highly action-focused (Bolger & Schilling, 1991). Lazarus (1999) found that stress can be perceived as any form of event that strains an individual's ability to cope. Several studies have found gender differences on stress experience, women shows more perceived stress compared to men (Calais, Andrade & Lipp, 2003; Heiman, 2004). It has been found that women display more optimism than men and have lower levels of perceived stress compared to men (Sitz & Poche, 2006). Men and women perceive stress in different ways where women perceive high stress due to long working hours and family related and whereas men perceive stress based on financial and work pressures. Women who work more than 60 hours a week had less perceived control and report higher levels of stress than women who worked fewer hours. However, men who worked more than 60 hours reported increased levels of control (Tytherliegh et al. 2007). Men scored lower compared to women with perceived stress, this might be because men are fearful of disclosing or quite unaware of their feelings (Hogan, 2002). Women tend to report greater stress and more stressful life events than men, potentially because women participate of their different roles in family life and work, as compared with men (Cohen, 2012). Studies have been found that women tend to be more active and problem-focused compared to men in their way of coping whereas men tend to be used more emotionally- focused coping (Ben- Zur & Zeidner, 1996). Other researchers have found that women tend to use coping strategies that are aimed at changing their emotional responses to a stressful situation, meanwhile men use more problem-focused or instrumental methods of handling stressful experiences (Endler & Parker, 1990; Matud, 2004; Ptacek et al., 1994). Study also found that there were no gender differences in coping with stress (Dyson & Renk, 2006).

Coping with stress

Because stress is an inevitable part of life, how a person is able to cope with stress is important for human function (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Doron et al. (2014) found that students who used high avoidant coping strategies (i.e., use of avoidance and low use of problem solving and cognitive restructuring) reported the highest levels of perceived stress. Their results also revealed that students using adaptive coping strategies (i.e., high use of problem solving, moderate use of cognitive restructuring, and low use of distraction and avoidance) were less likely to abuse substances and more likely to engage in physical activity. Ganesan & Yosindra, (2018) found negative correlation between perceived stress and coping style where it shows that the undergraduates who possess low stress level were likely to have a better stress coping strategy. The degree of stress to the junior high school students in physical education programs in Chung Hua County is mostly positive correlated to the frequency of application of coping strategies (Ho et al., 2016).

In today's world, most of us are experiencing stress. Studies have shown that coping plays a central role in adaptation to stressful life events (Coyne, 2000). Gender differences were also found on the way they cope with stress (Aldwin, 2007; Desmaris & Alkisanis, 2005; Dyson & Renk, 2006). In view of this, it is important to study perceived stress and coping style and it is expected to give us deeper understanding of the psychological variables. The main purpose of the present study is to find out the relationship between perceived stress and coping style among Mizo adults and to examine gender differences on these psychological variables. The objectives and hypotheses were made based on the above discussion.

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Objectives

The present study is designed with the following objectives:

- To examine the relationship between the behavioral measures.
- To determine the independent effects of gender (male and female) on the psychological variables.

Hypotheses

- It is expected that there will be significant relationship between Perceived Stress and Coping style among Mizo adults.
- It is expected that there will be significant independent effects of gender on the psychological variables.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

In the present study, 170 participants (85 males and 85 females) living in Mizoram were selected using random sampling procedure. Their age ranges between 16-40 years.

Design of the study

Between subject design - 170 participants (85 rural and 85 urban)

Psychological measures

- **Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, S., and Williamson, G., 1988):** The Perceived Stress Scale is a 10-item self-report questionnaire that measures persons' evaluation of the stressfulness of the situations in the past month of their lives. PSS-10 scores are obtained by reversing the scores on the four positive items, e.g., 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, etc. and then summing across all 10 items. Items 4, 5, 7, and 8 are the positively stated items. Scores can range from 0 to 40, with higher scores indicating greater stress.
- **Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS: Endler, N.S. and Parker, D.A., 1999):** The CISS is a self-report paper-and-pencil measure of coping, consisting of 48 items. There is both an adult form and an adolescent form. Sixteen items assess Emotion-Oriented coping. There are two subscales for the Avoidance-Oriented scale; Distraction (eight items), and Social Diversion (five items). (The three remaining items for the Avoidance scales are not scored for these two subscales). Each item is rated on a 5-point frequency scale ranging from (1) "Not at all" to (5) "Very much".

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 The mean, standard deviation, cronbach alpha, skewness and kurtosis of the scales of the behavioural measures.

Variable	N	M	SD	A	Skewness		Kurtosis	
					Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Male	85							
PSS TT		16.32	6.140	.755	-.050	.261	.507	.566
CTTT		49.64	10.374	.975	-.068	.261	-.432	.566
CETT		44.89	10.307	.516	.196	.261	.358	.566
CATT		44.59	10.011	.798	.076	.261	-.389	.566
Female	85							
PSSTT		18.55	6.070	.755	-.071	.517	-.222	.532
CTTT		49.48	11.080	.975	.237	.517	.386	.532
CETT		49.01	10.074	.516	.154	.517	.675	.532
CATT		44.54	10.624	.798	.429	.517	.507	.532

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Note: PSSTT –Perceived Stress Scale, CTTT –Task-Oriented Coping, CETT- Emotion Oriented Coping, CATT- Avoidance – Oriented Coping

From result table-1 we can see that mean differences of the two groups (Male and Female) on the psychological variables. Female participants show greater mean scores on Perceived Stress and on Emotion Oriented Coping as compared to male participants. The reliability coefficient of correlation for the scales of Cronbach's alpha was .755 on Perceived Stress Scale, .975 on Task-Oriented Coping, .516 on Emotion Oriented Coping and .798 on Avoidance – Oriented Coping. Table- 2 Pearson Correlation table shows significant positive correlation among all the psychological variables.

Table 2 *The interrelationship between the demographic variables and the psychological measures.*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
PSSTT		-	.298**	.529**	.361**
CTTT			-	.355**	.434**
CETT				-	.566**
CATT					-

Note: PSSTT –Perceived Stress Scale, CTTT –Task-Oriented Coping, CETT- Emotion Oriented Coping, CATT- Avoidance – Oriented Coping.

*p < .05. **p < .0

Table 3 *Levene's Test of Homogeneity of variances.* *Note:* PSSTT –Perceived Stress Scale,

Variables	F	df1	df2	Sig.
PSTT	.098	1	168	.975
CTTT	.424	1	168	.516
CETT	.066	1	168	.798
CATT	.098	1	168	.755

CTTT –Task-Oriented Coping, CETT- Emotion Oriented Coping, CATT- Avoidance – Oriented Coping

*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 4 *One-Way Analysis of Variance for Gender on the psychological variables.*

DV	Factor	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PSTT	Gender	212.353	1	212.353	5.698	.018
CTTT		.147	1	.147	.001	.971
CETT		461.176	1	461.176	4.342	.039
CATT		11.388	1	11.388	.113	.738

Note: PSSTT –Perceived Stress Scale, CTTT –Task-Oriented Coping, CETT- Emotion Oriented Coping, CATT- Avoidance – Oriented Coping

*p < .05. **p < .01

Levene's Test depicted insignificant results on all the variables which show that we can use the analysis of variance. One way ANOVA test was administered to examine the differences of perceived stress and coping style on the basis of gender. There were significant effects of gender on Perceived Stress Scale and Emotion Oriented Coping.

CONCLUSION

Earlier study has shown that perceived stress was correlated with all coping styles (Kwiatosz-Muc et al., 2019). The present research also showed similar results indicating significant positive correlation between perceived stress and task - oriented, emotion oriented and avoidant oriented coping. Meanwhile, there are also other researches (Ganesan & Yosindra, 2018) who found negative correlation wherein those who possess low stress level were likely to have a better stress coping strategy. In the present study, we also examined differences between male and female on the psychological variables, the results indicate that female depicted higher level of perceived stress as compared to men. It was supported by Hogan (2002) who found that men scored lower compared to women in perceived stress. Female were also found to be higher in emotion-oriented coping. Several studies have also found that women tend to use coping strategies that are aimed at changing their emotional responses to a stressful situation, whereas men use more problem-focused or instrumental methods of handling stressful experiences (Endler and Parker, 1990; Matud, 2004; Ptacek et al., 1994). The finding of the present research gave us a better understanding of the relationship between perceived stress and different style of coping and of course gender differences on these variables among Mizo adults. It will be worthwhile to conduct the same research in a larger population or by adding some other variables to get a wider understanding of the population.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Ralte R. & Lalfakzuali C. (2021). Perceived Stress and Coping Styles among Mizo Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(4), 689-694. DIP:18.01.067.20210904, DOI:10.25215/0904.067