

Stress Coping and Mental Well-Being in Gym Going Population among Adults

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to find the relationship between stress coping and mental wellbeing and also the influence of stress coping on mental wellbeing in gym going population among adults. In this research adults were considered to be young adulthood and middle adulthood. A nonprobability snowball sampling method was used to draw a sample of 183 respondents from various parts of India. The Brief COPE scale was used to see 2 different types of coping strategies i.e., Avoidant Coping and Approach Coping, the scale which was consisting of 28 items. It was designed to measure effective and ineffective ways of coping with a stressful life event which was a short version of Brief COPE. The other scale which was used was Warwick -Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale (WEMWBS) which was also a short version of 14 items. This scale was used to assess good mental health and wellbeing. Data was collected by 183 participants all who were going to gym for at least 3 months and more. Correlation and regression analysis was used to assess the relationship and influence between stress coping and mental wellbeing among adults who were going to gym. The result of the study was found that There was a negative relationship between Avoidant coping and Mental wellbeing which was not significant. And There is a significant positive relationship between Approached coping and Mental wellbeing. When the research used simple linear regression to check the influence of stress coping on mental well-being the results revealed that Approach coping positively predicted Mental well-being after which the implication and limitations of the study was discussed.

Keywords: *Stress coping, Avoidant coping, Approached Coping, Mental Well-being, Gym-going adults in India*

Exercise is frequently advised as a technique to enhance physical health and fitness, but its advantages go far beyond the physical sphere. Research has shown that exercise can improve mental health and wellness, especially when it comes to stress management. Many people encounter stress on a regular basis, and if it is not effectively managed, it can negatively affect both physical and mental health. This trend of going to the gym has set a massive change in the wellbeing of life. Hence the topic "stress coping and mental wellbeing in the gym going population among adults". The study will be conducted

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Received: May 17, 2023; Revision Received: August 03, 2023; Accepted: August 08, 2023

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on a gym going population who have current gym membership, regular gym attendance with at least one gym workout session per week. And who have been in the gym for at least three months as it is stated by an article that it requires at least two weeks to get adjusted to gym and the workouts can give a clear outcome after at least 3 months(Julia Sullivan, Nov 2022). Now speaking of why adults for this research study in 2019 there was a research article published on "Age-Related Differences in Exercise Behavior Among Gym Members" by Napolitano, M.A. et al. This study looked at differences in exercise activity among gym goers based on their age. 841 people between the ages of 18 and 64 participated in surveys that evaluated exercise activity, motivation, and sociodemographic traits. In comparison to older persons, the findings showed that younger adults (aged 18–29) and middle-aged adults (aged 30-49) were more likely to be gym members (aged 50-64). Particularly, compared to only 38% of older persons, 56% of younger adults and 49% of middle-aged adults reported being gym members. Also, it was discovered that younger and middle-aged persons were more motivated to exercise than older adults. Talking in terms of gym population, physical exercise refers to the exercise done using equipment in the gym, which helps in aerobic training, bulking, compound exercise, deadlift, glutes, hit, hypertrophy, jumping jacks, knee wraps, lats which helps in physical fitness. These major training techniques used in the gym helps in muscle building, to build core strengths, good for the heart, helps in stretching muscles etc. Many health advantages of regular exercise have been demonstrated, including a decrease in stress and anxiety. Exercise helps to alleviate stress in part by increasing the body's natural mood-enhancing hormone, endorphin synthesis. Overall, exercising in the gym can be a useful method for enhancing both physical and mental health and can lead to a feeling of greater well-being.

Stress Coping The term "stress coping" refers to a variety of techniques people employ to control their bodily, psychological, and behavioural reactions to stressors. Many elements, such as those in the environment, society, and the individual themselves, can contribute to stress. Several coping mechanisms have been found to be useful in lowering stress levels, including cognitive reorganisation, social support, physical activity, relaxation methods, and mindfulness-based approaches. Numerous studies have shown that these coping mechanisms are effective at lowering stress and enhancing psychological well-being. The term "coping" describes a certain behavioural or cognitive reaction or method used to avoid or reduce stress. In this research the researcher is aiming to concentrate on two types of coping styles i.e., Avoidant Coping and Approach Coping which is defined in the following section of this paper.

Avoidant coping is the propensity to retreat from or avoid difficulties rather than actively confronting or managing them. Negative effects including increased stress, worry, and depression are frequently linked to this coping mechanism. The use of avoidant coping mechanisms has been linked to a higher risk of mental health issues, according to research.

Approach coping is the propensity to actively engage and manage difficulties rather than running away from or avoiding them. Positive results including enhanced resilience, good affect, and psychological well-being are frequently linked to this coping method. According to research, those who use approach coping techniques are better able to handle stress and are less likely to experience mental health issues.

Mental Wellbeing It is a combination of how we feel our emotions and life satisfaction and how we function (relationship with others, personal control, purpose in life and independence). Something which affects old, young and anyone who can experience mental

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wellbeing. (Paul Hamlyn Foundation). Having a feeling of purpose, meaning, and fulfilment in life, as well as the capacity to control stress and deal with adversity, are all characteristics of mental wellness, which is a condition of good mental health. According to research, having a healthy mind is linked to a number of advantages, such as better physical health, stronger social bonds, and higher levels of life satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

The association between stress coping and mental health in individuals who use the gym requires extensive research. Numerous grownups turn to physical activity as a stress-reduction strategy because exercise has long been known to be a powerful decongestant. Yet, little is known about the precise ways in which exercise affects mental health and how coping techniques vary from person to person. Knowing how adults who regularly use the gym cope with stress and maintain their mental health can have a significant impact on mental health interventions. It can support the identification of efficient coping mechanisms for stress management and mental health promotion in this population. Depending on an individual's coping mechanism and amount of stress, it can also help personalise exercise therapies to their particular needs. There has been some but not much research on this subject. A few research have looked into how coping mechanisms affect the mental health of physically active persons. One study, for instance, discovered that people who used exercise as a coping mechanism had lower levels of anxiety and sadness than people who did not. Regardless of coping mechanisms, a different study indicated that exercise was useful in lowering stress levels in people with high levels of stress. Ultimately, more research is required to completely comprehend the connection between stress management and mental health in adults who exercise. This can be used to help guide the creation of efficient interventions that support this population's mental health and well-being. Overall, studies investigating the relationship between stress management and mental health in adults who use the gym because it can enhance mental health outcomes, guide exercise programmes, and emphasise the value of exercise in preserving good mental health.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study whether there is any relationship between stress coping and mental wellbeing in the gym going population among adults. And also, upto what extent stress cope is influencing mental wellbeing.

Objectives of The Study

- To assess the level of stress coping and mental wellbeing in gym going population among adults.
- To study the significant relationship between stress coping and mental wellbeing in gym going population among adults.
- To study the influence of stress coping on Mental wellbeing in gym going population among adults.

Hypotheses

- Null hypothesis: It is a type of statistical hypothesis that says that no statistical significance exists in the given set of observations. It can be denoted just as null or H₀.
- Ho₁. There is no significant difference in the levels of stress coping and mental wellbeing in gym going population among adults.

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- Ho2. There is no significant relationship between stress coping and mental wellbeing in gym going population among adults.
- Ho3. There is no significant influence of stress coping on mental wellbeing in gym going population among adults.

Sample

A sample of 183 individual were taken from Karnataka, TamilNadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Kerala, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Goa for the present study. This study includes both male and females of age between 18-55(young adults to middle adulthood). The data was collected using non-probability snowball sampling and collected through online platforms. When a population is difficult to contact or there is no database or other sample frame to assist you locate them, snowball sampling is used. Snowball sampling is frequently used in studies of socially marginalised groups like drug addicts, the homeless, or sex workers. This sampling strategy entails a primary data source proposing additional prospective data sources that could take part in the investigations. With the snowball sampling method, a researcher can create a sample only through recommendations. As a result, this technique is also known as the chain-referral sampling technique. It's common to use snowball sampling for business research. When it is difficult to select participants for study samples because a population is unknown or rare, the snowball sampling approach is frequently used.

Tools

Two instruments were used in this study,

1. **Brief-COPE:** brief -cope is a 28-item self-report questionnaire designed to measure effective and ineffective ways to cope with a stressful life event. The following tool was developed by Carver. C.S in the year 1997. The scale is based on three factors of coping – Problem Focussed Coping, Emotion-Focussed Coping and Avoidant Coping. The original version is a 60 item question which was constricted to short form which is used in research. The test has the best reliability and validity according to the recent article published by Felipe E. García, Carmen Gloria Barraza-Peña, et.al(2018) and the scale is more frequently used.
2. **Warwick -Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS):** It is a 14-item scale of mental well-being covering subjective well-being and psychological functioning, in which all items are worded positively and address aspects of positive mental health. There are 2 versions of this scale: a 7 item and 14 item scale. The scale was published in the year 2006 by the University of Warwick and Edinburgh. The scale has been extensively validated in the adult population.

Design

This is a quantitative correlational research design study that involves statistical analysis of the data by carrying out correlation and regression analysis. In this research, descriptive analysis was used to assess the level of stress coping and mental wellbeing in the research population. Also, correlation analysis was performed to look at the connection between two or more variables. It can determine if and how strongly two variables are related to one another using this methodology. Investigating if there is a meaningful relationship between variables and how closely they are related is the main goal of employing correlation analysis. In the context of the current research this analysis was used to determine the relationship between stress coping and mental wellbeing. After which regression analysis was done to study the influence of stress coping on mental wellbeing in adults.

RESULTS

This chapter reviews the result and analysis of the study using MS Excel and IBM SPSS 29.0 for the data of 183 responses.

The aim of the study was to find the relationship between stress coping and mental wellbeing in gym going population among young adulthood and middle adulthood. The data was collected through online mode using google form, and the target was on the Indian population. A total of 183 adults participated in the research by answering two questionnaires one on stress coping and the other on mental wellbeing. The data was then coded and analysed using SPSS.

Table 1 Shows the Demographic Details of the Participants

	Frequency	Percentage %
Age (in years)		
18-44	178	97%
45-55	5	.02%
Gender		
Male	139	76%
Female	44	24%
Location		
Karnataka	40	21%
Tamil Nadu	26	14%
Telangana	10	.05%
Andhra Pradesh	19	0.10%
Maharashtra	10	.05%
Uttar Pradesh	11	.06%
Delhi	8	.04%
Uttarakhand	10	.05%
Kerala	20	0.10%
West Bengal	10	.05%
Jharkhand	5	.02%
Rajasthan	10	.05%
Goa	2	.01%

Table 1 shows the demographic details of 183 participants who took part in the current research study. The target age group which was chosen were young adults and middle adults age between 18-55 who were currently going to gym for more than 3 months period. 178 people belong to the age group of young adulthood and 5 people who belong to middle adulthood which shows the percentage of 97% and .02% of the sample collected. The other category in which the population was classified was based on gender. There are a total of 139 male which shows the percentage of 76 and a total of 44 females which shows the percentage of 24%. As the research was conducted all over India most of the participants are from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu with 40 and 26 number of participants accounting for 21% and 14%. The other population are from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Kerala, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Goa respectively.

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Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Avoidant Coping, Approached Coping, Mental Well-being

	Avoidant coping	Approach coping	Mental Wellbeing
M	30.30	32.27	45.04
SD	06.21	06.18	08.42

Note: M-Mean, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 2 shows the Descriptive measure of the responses of the participant in the respective questionnaire across the sample. The mean and standard deviation score for Avoidant coping was 30.3 and 6.21, the mean and standard deviation score for Approached coping was 32.27 and 6.18. The mean and standard deviation score for Mental Well-being was 45.04 and 8.42 respectively. We can see that in current research when we compare stress coping and mental wellbeing the population has more stress coping than mental wellbeing. And they have more of approach coping compared to avoidant coping. Hence the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the level of stress coping and mental wellbeing is rejected. The alternative hypothesis which says that stress coping is more than the mental wellbeing in the gym going population among adults is accepted.

Table 3 Pearson correlation between Avoidant Coping, Approached Coping and Mental Well-Being

Variables	Avoidant coping	Approach coping	Mental Wellbeing
Avoidant coping	1	–	-0.058
Approach coping	–	1	0.323**
Mental Wellbeing	-0.058	0.323**	1

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 3 shows the level of significance relationship between Approach Coping, Avoidant coping and Mental Well-being. The coefficients table gives information on the importance of each predictor variable in the model as well as the strength and direction of the relationships between each predictor variable and the dependent variable.

It can be seen that the Pearson correlation coefficient for mental wellbeing and avoidant coping is -0.058 which indicates that there is negative correlation between mental wellbeing and avoidant coping and p value is <0.01 and hence the relationship is not significant. The null hypothesis that, there is no significant relationship between the Avoidant coping and Mental wellbeing is accepted. Hence when avoidant coping increases mental wellbeing decreases.

It can be seen that the Pearson correlation coefficient for mental wellbeing and approached coping is 0.323 which indicates that there is significantly positive relationship between mental wellbeing and approached coping and p value is <0.01 and hence the relationship is significant. The null hypothesis which says that there is no significant relationship between the Approached coping and Mental wellbeing is rejected. There is a significant relationship between Approached coping and Mental wellbeing. Hence when Approached coping increases Mental wellbeing also increase.

Table 4 Regression Analysis summary of Approached Coping and Mental Well-being

Variable	B	beta	SE	t
Mental Well-being	36.63***		3.14	11.66
Approached Coping	0.83***	0.06	0.11	7.13
R square	0.22			

Note: N=183

***p < .001

Table 4 shows the impact of approached coping on mental wellbeing in the gym going population among adults, since there is a positive correlation between mental wellbeing and approached coping regression is used for these two variables where mental wellbeing is considered as a dependent variable and approached coping is considered as independent variable hence the table shows impact of approached coping on mental wellbeing. An overview of the goodness of fit of the linear regression model predicting "Mental Wellbeing" using "Approached Coping" as predicted from the above table, The R square value of 0.22 revealed that the predicted variable (approached coping) explained 0.22% variance in the outcome variable with $F(2,180)=25.81, p < .001$ which means that 22% of the time approach coping is influencing mental wellbeing showing that other variables can be introduced which is 78% of the time influencing mental wellbeing. The other variables which could be introduced can help to check the effect on mental wellbeing. The findings revealed that Approach coping positively predicted Mental well-being (Beta= 0.06, $p < .001$). Including the F-value (25.81), which measures the overall significance of the model, and the t-value (7.13), which measures the significance of the individual variable "Approached Coping". Hence "Approached Coping" is significantly related to "Mental Well-being," and the model explains a moderate amount of variance in the dependent variable. The "Approached Coping" coefficient (0.83) indicates that, on average, the "Mental Well-being" score increases by 0.83 units for every unit increase in "Approached Coping," holding all other variables constant.

DISCUSSION

Several researchers have discovered a strong negative correlation between avoidant coping strategies and mental health. For instance, Folkman and Lazarus' (1988) study revealed that people who utilised avoidant coping mechanisms typically had higher levels of stress and anxiety. Moreover, Heppner, Cook, and Wright (1999) discovered a negative correlation between avoidant coping and life satisfaction. A different study by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) discovered a connection between avoidant coping and depression. In the year 2017 there was an article published on Avoidant coping and mental health-related quality of life in individuals with multiple sclerosis by Marck, C. H., De Livera, A. M., Weiland, T. J., Jelinek, G. A., & Neate, S. L. In this study, the researchers looked at the connection between avoidant coping and the quality of life factors related to mental health in people with multiple sclerosis. They discovered that lower mental health-related quality of life was linked to higher levels of avoidant coping.

One research paper that supports the idea that mental wellbeing has a positive correlation with approached coping is, In the year 1997 an article was published on Approach coping and well-being: Evidence from the National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States by Charles S. Carver. Carver used data from the National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States to examine the association between approach coping (i.e.,

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actively attempting to solve issues and change circumstances) and psychological well-being. The findings demonstrated that people who used approach coping had better levels of wellbeing than people who employed avoidance coping (i.e., avoiding problems and situations). The study offers proof that using a strategy to coping with stress and promoting mental health is successful. The fact that this article has been cited more than 1,000 times shows how important it is to psychology.

Short COPE research and emerging adulthood theory. Another research article which was published in the year 2021 on the topic "Coping with COVID-19 Pandemic: A Population-Based Study in Bangladesh" by K M Amran Hossain, Karen Saunders, Mohamed Sakel, Lori Maria Walton, Veena Raigangar, Profile Zakir Uddin. The study was conducted using an online survey that was distributed to adults in Bangladesh during the first wave of the pandemic. The survey assessed the impact of the pandemic on participants' mental health, coping strategies, and socio-demographic characteristics. The study found that the pandemic had a significant impact on the mental health of participants, with high levels of anxiety, depression, and stress reported. The study also found that participants employed a range of coping strategies, including problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and religious coping. The authors suggest that these findings have important implications for mental health interventions during the pandemic and highlight the need for culturally sensitive approaches to mental health support in Bangladesh. Participants in this study used a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 epidemic.

Limitation

As the sampling technique was non probability snow ball sampling, limitation is that it can introduce bias, as the sample is not randomly selected from the population of interest and may not be representative. Also, the scale which is used was other than Indian this might also have cultural biases.

Further Recommendation

Future suggestion for the study would be that it can be a comparative study between gym going and non-going population so that we can see the actual difference between how the stress coping is helping in mental wellbeing in both the population and to see up to what extent going to gym is helping with the same.

And as we could see in the result that approached coping is influencing mental wellbeing 22% of the time for other 78% of the time there can be other variables which can be found out using further study.

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Acknowledgement

I would like to extend a heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Molly Joy, Head of the Department, Department of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College for guiding me throughout the entire process of research and helping me understand the nuances of conducting a research study in a detailed manner. I would like to extend a warm gratitude to Ms. Procheta Mahanta, Assistant professor, Kristu Jayanti College for guiding me through the process of research in the initial phase. I would like to thank Dr. Molly Joy, Head of the Department, Department of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College for being a constant source of encouragement in completion of this research study. I would like to thank the Rev. Fr. Dr. Augustin George, Principal, Kristu Jayanti College for enabling me an opportunity to perform my research study under the guidance and supervision of my professors, without whom this research would not have been possible. Last but not the least, I would like to extend a warm gratitude to my parents, my and the almighty for their support and blessings which has helped me in completing my research work successfully.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Lekha, U. & Joy, M. (2023). Stress Coping and Mental Well-Being in Gym Going Population among Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *11*(3), 1655-1664. DIP:18.01.160.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.160