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**Research Paper**

# Relationship Between Perceived Stress and Coping Strategies Among University Students

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between stress and coping among university students using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Brief COPE scale. The research aims to explore how university students perceive and cope with stressors and to identify coping strategies associated with lower levels of perceived stress. A sample of 100 university students will be recruited to participate in the study. Participants will complete the PSS to assess their perceived stress levels and the Brief COPE scale to measure coping strategies. Data will be analysed using Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between perceived stress levels and coping strategies. The study hypothesizes that there will be a significant relationship between perceived stress levels and coping strategies among university students. Findings from this study will contribute to a better understanding of stress and coping mechanisms among university students, with implications for interventions aimed at promoting mental health and well-being in this population.

***Keywords:*** *Stress, Perceived Stress, Coping, Coping Strategies, Academic Stress*

## What is stress?

Stress is characterized as a condition of anxiety or psychological pressure triggered by challenging circumstances. It's a natural reaction in humans, urging us to confront difficulties and dangers. Stress is a universal experience, but how we react to it greatly impacts our well-being (WHO, 2023).

Stress is the body's physiological and psychological response to external pressure or demands, whether they are physical, mental, or emotional in nature. These pressures or demands, often referred to as stressors (Walker, 2023), can come from various sources such as work, relationships, financial problems, environmental factors, or even internal conflicts. The evolutionary purpose of stress is rooted in its role in survival. Throughout human history, stress has played a crucial role in enabling individuals to respond to threatening situations and adapt to challenges in their environment. Cannon suggested that the response, termed fight or flight, occurs when an individual encounters intense emotion, particularly those linked to a perceived threat (Cannon, 1932). When faced with a perceived threat or challenge, the body's stress response is activated, initiating a cascade of physiological

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changes aimed at preparing the individual to either confront the threat (fight) or flee from it (flight). This response involves the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, which increase heart rate, elevate blood pressure, and sharpen focus, among other effects. It facilitates individuals to internally and externally adapt to threats in their surroundings, enabling them to survive and effectively confront the threat (Cannon, 1915).

**Academic Stress**

It is considered a milestone when an individual enters a university, marked by newfound freedom, new academic challenges, and various social opportunities. However, even with all this excitement, Late adolescence and emerging adulthood are transitional periods marked by major physiological and psychological changes, including elevated stress (Hogan and Astone, 1986). Academic stress refers to the psychological condition experienced by students due to ongoing pressure from both social expectations and self-imposed demands within school settings, leading to a student's psychological response (Misra et. al., 2022).

Students experience academic stress throughout their secondary school (Jayanthi et. al., 2015), high school (Gurung et. al., 2020), and university (Padilla et. al., 2020), educational careers. Studies have shown that academic stress has been positively associated with depression (Jayanthi et. al., 2015), PSQ (Zunhammer et. al., 2014), and MPA (Gilor et. al., 2019) among students.

Stress experienced by undergraduate and graduate students stems from a variety of factors, encompassing both academic and non-academic elements (Brad and Schoonheim-Klein, 2009). College students encounter stress stemming from multiple factors, with various contributing elements accounting its complexity (Reddy et. al., 2018). From maintaining high scores to completing work before the deadline, students are always under pressure to excel academically. And like icing on the top, students' anxiety (Gallagher, 2008) heightens because of fear of failure (Alkhazaleh, 2016), underperformance (Yerkes, 1908), etc.0 University students are packed with assignments, projects, readings, practicals, exams, etc. which makes time management (Naturil-Alphonso et. al., 2018) an impossible task. However, the sheer workload along with tight deadlines can create a sense of overwhelm and anxiety. The fear of not completing the work before the deadline or providing quality work can add to student's stress and last-minute cramming due to procrastination (Naturil-Alphonso et, al., 2018).

Whether it is in comparison to other students or previous achievements, the fear of underperformance (Bledsoe et. al., 2014), or the fear of falling short can be paralyzing. This fear can manifest as test anxiety, imposter syndrome, or perfectionism, which can hinder academic success. The constant pressure to excel academically can take a load on student's mental health. Depression (Kumaraswamy, 2013), anxiety (Kuramaswami, 2013), and other stress-related disorders are very common in the academic field which is a result of the relentless pursuit of academic achievements.

Apart from the academic world, students also have to go through complex social dynamics (Salmela-Aro, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2007) and relationships (Arnett, 2000). For many, it is a time of transition and exploration as they go through new relationships (Arnett, 2000) and want to establish a new identity for themselves. No matter how exciting it is for some, other students might not feel like that, their social interactions (Krause and Jay, 1991) can be a source of stress, as students grapple with issues such as peer pressure (Moldes, 2019), social comparison (Hanus et. al., 2015), and feelings of loneliness or isolation (Stankovska, 2016).

Marked by newfound freedom and social exploration (Lee, 2016), this is a time of transition for many students. During this period students experiment with their identities and interests (Rydell et, al., 2009), they question their values (Eccles, 2009), and navigate their path to adulthood. Although it may be exciting at first, one can easily be overwhelmed because of uncertainty (Li et. al., 2020). Prevalence of social media and exposure to other people's lives can bring out the fear of inadequacy (Tok et. al., 2023) and self-doubt (Jan et. al., 2017). Students may engage in comparative behaviour by measuring past achievements, appearances, etc. with their peers. This comparison leads to distorted self-worth (Siereli et. al., 2023) and feelings of insecurity (Saidah et. al., 2023).

Social interactions within the university environment frequently involve various forms of peer pressure. Students may experience pressure to conform to prevailing societal standards, meet norm groups, or participate in activities that may not resonate with their own beliefs. This pressure to confirm or gain acceptance from peers can lead to heightened levels of stress and anxiety, as individuals navigate the challenge of maintaining social inclusion while staying true to themselves.

Apart from social and academic stress, individuals also have to deal with a range of personal challenges that add to their stress. These challenges may include financial issues (Adams et. al., 2016), family obligations, health concerns, etc. Balancing these and also striving to be a model student while being in the social world is bound to cause some kind of stress, it will lead to heightened stress and emotional strain.

Many students struggle to manage to make ends meet, which leads them to anxiety and stress about managing finances students have to work part-time to pay off their student loans. With tuition fees, housing bills, and other living expenses, financial insecurity is bound to settle in. Physical and mental health issues can also hinder students and impact student's well-being and academic performance (Ansari et. al., 2011). Chronic illnesses can pose significant challenges for students, leaving them to navigate the intricate healthcare systems all on their own while managing academics. The stigma around mental health issues can also prevent students from seeking the support they need to cope effectively.

Elevated stress levels can hinder cognitive abilities, impacting students; capacity to focus, retain information, and tackle problems efficiently (McEwen et. al., 1995). Prolonged stress may result in cognitive impairment such as shortened attention spans, compromised decision making skills, and diminished academic achievements. Consequently, this can intensify feelings of frustration and self-doubt, perpetuating a cycle of stress and academic struggle (lasikiewicz et. al.,2013).

## Coping

The concept of coping in psychology was first introduced by Richard Lazarus and Suzan Folkman in their seminal work "Stress, appraisal and coping" published in 1984. Coping refers to the mental and behavioural strategies employed to handle both internal and external sources of stress (Folkman et. al., 2004). Coping is specifically utilized to describe the deliberate and voluntary actions taken in response to stress, in contrast to 'defence mechanisms' which are subconscious adaptive reactions, with both serving to alleviate or endure stress (Venner, 1988).

## Coping Strategies

Following are the coping strategies that are utilized by many individuals:

- Active Coping (LeDoux et. al., 2001): this entails actively taking measures to confront stressor head-on which could involve problem-solving, seeking information, or taking action, or implementing changes to improve the situation.
- Planning (Christen et. al., 1985): Involves creating a structured plan to address the stressor. This may include setting goals, creating schedules, and organizing resources to effectively manage the situation.
- Positive reframing (Stoeber et.al., 2011): Involves shifting one's perspectives to find a more positive or optimistic interpretation of the stressor. This may involve finding silver lining, focusing on personal growth, or looking for lessons learned.
- Acceptance (Lu et. al., 2022): Involves accepting the reality of the stressor without attempting to change it. This may involve acknowledging one's feelings and learning to live with the situation as it is.
- Seeking emotional support (Chamber et. al., 2001): involves reaching out to others for empathy, understanding, and comfort. This may involve talking to friends, family, or counsellors about one's feelings and experiences.
- Seeking instrumental support (Schwarzer et. al., 1996): Involves seeking practical assistance or resources to address the stressors. This may involve asking for help with tasks, seeking advice, or accessing professional services.
- Self-distract (Kimbro, 2022): Involves engaging in activities or behaviors to distract oneself from the stressor. This may include hobbies, exercise, or entertainment to temporarily shift focus away from the source of stress.
- Denial (Janoff et. al., 1987): Involves refusing to acknowledge or accept the existence of the stressor. This may involve minimizing or ignoring the problem, which can provide temporary relief but may hinder long-term coping.
- Venting (Trần et. al., 2023): Involves expressing one's emotions and frustrations about the stressor. This may involve talking to someone, writing in a journal, or engaging in physical activities to release pent-up emotions.
- Behavioural disengagement (O'Toole, 2014): Involves withdrawing from the stressor or avoiding dealing with it altogether. This may involve giving up on goals or responsibilities in response to perceived inability to cope.
- Self-blame (Spataro et. al., 2016): Involves withdrawing from the stressor or avoiding dealing with it altogether. This may involve giving up on goals or responsibilities in response to perceived inability to cope.
- Religion (Pargament et. al., 1998): Involves drawing on religious or spiritual beliefs and practices to find meaning, comfort, and guidance in times of stress. This may include prayer, meditation, or seeking support from religious communities.
- Humor (Führ, 2002): Involves using humor and laughter to lighten the mood and reduce stress. This may involve finding humor in difficult situations, telling jokes, or watching comedy to shift perspective and improve mood.
- Substance use (Mauro et. al., 2015): Involves using alcohol, drugs, or other substances to cope with stress. While substances may provide temporary relief, they can also lead to dependency, addiction, and negative consequences for physical and mental health.

### *Purpose of the study*

The main purpose of this study is to look into the relationship between perceived stress and coping strategies using PSS and Brief COPE among university students. This study aims to

bring light upon the factors that cause university students' stress and what strategy is more prevalent among students to relieve them of this stress.

***Significance of the study***

The significance of this study lies in its potential to address critical gaps in the understanding of stress perception and coping strategies among university students. By investigating the relationship between these factors, the study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform both research endeavours and practical interventions aimed at supporting student well-being.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Koolhas J. M et. al., 2011 discussed about the evolving understanding of the term "stress" in scientific research and proposes a more nuanced definition. It highlighted that the conventional use of the term may not accurately capture the range of physiological responses to various stimuli, including both positive and negative experiences. The authors suggested restricting the term "stress" to situations where environmental demands overwhelm an organism's natural regulatory capacity, particularly in cases involving unpredictability and uncontrollability. Physiologically, stress is characterized by either the absence of an anticipatory response or a reduced recovery of the neuroendocrine reaction. This refined definition could have implications for stress research and how results are interpreted in terms of adaptive or maladaptive responses.

Kemeny et. al., 2003 underscored the multifaceted relationship between stress and physiological systems, highlighting bidirectional influences and the nuanced nature of stress responses. It challenges the conventional generality model, advocating for an integrated specificity model that considers individual differences and contextual factors. This shift promises a deeper understanding of stress's diverse effects.

Pearlin et. al., 1981 did a longitudinal study that examined the interplay of life events, chronic strains, self-concepts, coping, and social supports in the stress process. Using involuntary job disruptions as an example, it demonstrates how such events exacerbate enduring role and economic strains, leading to diminished self-concepts and increased vulnerability to depression. Coping and social supports indirectly mitigate depression by tempering the underlying stress processes.

Misra et. al., 2000 investigated academic stress perceptions among college students and faculty, revealing a notable discrepancy between their perspectives. Faculty perceived higher student stress levels and reactions than students reported. Stress variations across academic years and genders were observed. The findings underscore the need for enhanced faculty-student interactions to address these disparities effectively.

Akgun et. al., 2003 examined the relationship between academic stress, learned resourcefulness, and academic performance in first-year undergraduates. Results showed that learned resourcefulness moderated the negative impact of academic stress on grades. Highly resourceful students were less affected by stress, highlighting the importance of resourcefulness in academic success.

Paralkar et. al., 2023 examined how ambiguity and uncertainty tolerance relate to academic stress coping in undergraduate students. Findings suggest that intolerance of ambiguity is a stronger predictor of both approach and avoidance coping strategies compared to intolerance

of uncertainty. These insights can inform vocational and mental health 448ounselling for college students.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Aim*

The aim of this study is to understand the relationship between perceived stress and coping strategies with the help of the perceived stress scale and Brief COPE by Cohen et. al., and Moran et. al. respectively.

### *Objective*

Following are the objectives of the study:

- To examine the perceived stress level of university students across various domains of their academic and personal lives.
- To analyze the coping strategies employed by university students to help them cope across various domains of academic and personal lives
- To investigate the relationship between perceived stress and coping strategies by university students

### *Hypothesis*

There is a significant relationship between perceived stress levels and coping strategies among university students, as measured by the PSS and Brief COPE scale.

### *Research Design*

This is quantitative research that finds out the relationship between perceived stress and coping among university students. The two scales used to complete this study are the Perceived Stress Scale and the Brief COPE, both being reliable and validated making data to be collected consistently. For an easy and quick data collection Google Forms is used and then converted to Google Excell for the further calculations and result computation.

### *Participants*

The methodology in this research involved the utilization of google forms which made the data collection of variety of students possible therefore ensuring a diverse representation within the sample. A deliberate effort was made to gather 100 samples from visiting different course students to using social media to spread the google form. This approach was used to make sure students from various backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints among participants, enhancing the generalizability of the study's findings. Individuals who attended regular colleges were selected both males and females. Since the data collection was done via online platforms, access to mobiles platforms was a must.

### *Sampling*

In the study random sampling was used as a primary method for participant collection. This method involves selecting participants in such a way that every person from the population had an equal chance to be selected. This approach ensures to the larger representation of the sample and makes sure to keep the biasness at the minimum.

With the use of random sampling, participants were chosen purely on luck, without the influence of any predetermined criteria. This method was used to increase generalizability of the study to make sure that the results are not influenced by specific demographics or characteristics of the participants.

To accurately reflect the diversity and variability of the university students, random sampling approach was used.

***Procedure***

The data collection procedure for this study followed a systematic and standardized approach, utilizing Google Forms as the platform for participants to complete the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Brief COPE questionnaire, assessing their perceived stress levels and coping strategies, respectively. Initially, a comprehensive questionnaire was meticulously crafted on Google Forms, incorporating validated scales and presented in a user-friendly format for easy comprehension. Recruitment efforts spanned multiple channels, including university email lists, student organizations, and social media platforms, with participants provided a clear introduction to the study's purpose and confidentiality measures. Participants accessed and completed the questionnaire at their convenience, with the survey designed for accessibility across various devices. The questionnaire comprised two main sections, each capturing different aspects of stress appraisal and coping behaviors, ensuring a comprehensive assessment. Privacy measures were strictly adhered to, with no personally identifiable information collected, and participant anonymity and data security were further ensured through Google Forms' configuration. Upon completion, responses were compiled into a centralized dataset for statistical analysis using Pearson's Correlation, with data cleaning procedures implemented to maintain integrity and reliability. Overall, the data collection process prioritized transparency, participant confidentiality, and methodological rigor.

***Measure***

In this study, two main measures were employed to assess perceived stress levels and coping strategies among university students. these measures, the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Brief COPE questionnaire were selected to measure stress and coping behaviours across a diverse population.

**The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)** is a widely used self-report questionnaire designed to measure the degree to which individuals perceive situations in their lives as stressful. Developed by Sheldon Cohen et al. in 1983, the PSS assesses the extent to which individuals appraise situations in their lives as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overwhelming. The scale consists of a series of items that inquire about feelings and thoughts related to stressful experiences over the past month. Participants rate each item on a Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (very often), with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress levels.

**The Brief COPE questionnaire** is a shortened version of the original COPE Inventory developed by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub in 1989. It assesses various coping strategies individuals employ when faced with stressors, encompassing both adaptive and maladaptive coping behaviors. The Brief COPE questionnaire consists of 28 items organized into 14 subscales, each representing a different coping strategy. Participants indicate how frequently they engage in each coping strategy on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (I haven't been doing this at all) to 4 (I've been doing this a lot).

***Data Analysis***

The examination of collected data rigorously explored the relationship between perceived stress levels, gauged by the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), and coping strategies evaluated through the Brief COPE questionnaire. Pearson's Correlation served as the statistical tool to

quantify this relationship's strength and direction, offering valuable insights into stress-coping dynamics among university students.

Pearson's Correlation coefficient (r) was utilized to gauge the degree of linear association between perceived stress levels and coping strategies. This coefficient varies from -1 to +1, where positive values signify a positive correlation (i.e., higher stress associates with increased use of certain coping strategies), and negative values indicate a negative correlation (i.e., higher stress links with reduced use of certain coping strategies). The correlation coefficient's magnitude reflects the association's strength, with values nearer to +1 or -1 indicating a stronger connection.

The **null hypothesis (H0)**, suggesting no significant relationship between perceived stress and coping strategies, was rejected based on Pearson's Correlation, revealing a meaningful relationship between the two.

Upon computing the correlation coefficient and conducting hypothesis testing, the findings were interpreted:
- Total participants: 100
- Total Perceived stress score: 2040
- Subscale scores breakdown:
  - Subscale 1: 543
  - Subscale 2: 574
  - Subscale 3: 537
  - Subscale 4: 578
  - Subscale 5: 478
  - Subscale 6: 424
  - Subscale 7: 454
  - Subscale 8: 438
  - Subscale 9: 523
  - Subscale 10: 379
  - Subscale 11: 446
  - Subscale 12: 335
  - Subscale13: 404
  - Subscale 14: 501

## RESULT

Data collection utilized Google Forms, shared online and through personal requests to students and student associations, yielding a sample of 100 students. The Perceived Stress Scale and Brief COPE were administered via Likert scales, with the former rated on a five-point scale (0-4), where higher scores indicate greater stress, and the latter using a scale of 1-4 with 28 questions, representing two items for each of the 14 subscales. Raw scores were summed for each scale, and Pearson’s correlation was employed to assess the correlation between the 14 Brief COPE subscales and perceived stress levels.

***Result Table 1: This table shows the correlation coefficient, T statistics, and P Value of PSS and Brief COPE questionnaire.***

| Sub scale | Brief COPE | Coefficient | Correlation | T statistics | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Active Coping | -0.43 | Negative | -4.755764643 | 0.0000068 |
| **2** | Planning | -0.15 | Negative | -1.503948035 | 0.1358 |
| **3** | Positive Reframing | -0.27 | Negative | -2.789688121 | 0.0063 |
| **4** | Acceptance | -0.23 | Negative | -2.439944655 | 0.0165 |
| **5** | Seeking Emotional Support | 0.19 | Positive | 1.952257479 | 0.0538 |
| **6** | Seeking Instrumental Support | -0.104 | Negative | -1.041266986 | 0.3003 |
| **7** | Self- Distraction | -0.037 | Negative | -0.3692600569 | 0.7127 |
| **8** | Denial | 0.12 | Positive | 1.19852353 | 0.2336 |
| **9** | Venting | 0.29 | Positive | 3.057195804 | 0.0026 |
| **10** | Behavioural disengagement | 0.43 | Positive | 4.81439902 | 0.0000054 |
| **11** | Self-Blame | 0.27 | Positive | 2.821132318 | 0.0058 |
| **12** | Religion | 0.19 | Positive | 1.963098804 | 0.0525 |
| **13** | Humor | 0.49 | Positive | 5.569215505 | 0.0000002 |
| **14** | Substance Use | 0.58 | Positive | 7.147820026 | 0.00000000016 |

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to find the relationship between perceived stress and coping strategies among university students using the perceived stress scale and Brief COPE questionnaire. Stress is the physiological and psychological response to any situation in the environment. These stressors initiate the physical body's stress response of fight or flight according to the needed situation. There are five types of stress starting with acute stress or short-term stress, it is a kind of like everyday stress that we feel immediately from our environment. The second type of stress is Chronic Stress also known as long-lasting stress, which results from ongoing situations such as money-related stress, family problems, etc. Next on this list, wasn't exactly proposed but the idea was that there are two natures of stress, one is positive stress or Eustress while the other one is Distress or negative stress. Stress is classified on the basis of its source meaning what the origin is and why for example family family-related or academics-related. Last but not least, stress based on severity as the name suggests categorizes stress on the basis of the basis on severity from daily hassles to traumatic experiences. As a student enters the university it is marked by one of the most influential years of their life, these changes shape them as an individual for the upcoming future. As much fun as it is, these transitions cause a huge amount of stress and they can stem from various factors that may or may not be academically rooted. Students find themselves being flushed with work and tight deadlines and their fear of failure or underperformance is triggered by the anxiety caused by it. During these times students are also exploring about their social dynamics and relationships getting to know about their preferences, and trying to find their identity while staying socially included and avoiding isolation or alienation. Students who are not from well-off families, have to work jobs to support themselves and sometimes their families leading to finance-related stress. Students also want to work towards getting a higher grade in the class if they want to continue with post graduate programs or if other reasons add to the already pre-existing stress. Persistent stress can affect our cognitive abilities by hindering a person's capacity to focus and concentrate or retain their memories. This stress can also lead a person on the doorstep of

hospitals and stigma against mental health makes it hard for them to get help. Coping is the way a person overcomes stressors, there are fourteen types of coping strategies as follows: Active coping, planning, positive reframing, acceptance, seeking emotional support, seeking instrumental support, self-distract, denial, venting, behavioral disengagement, self-blame, religion, humor, and substance abuse. Kumaraswamy et. al., 2013 investigated academic stress among students in commerce, management, humanities, and basic sciences streams, utilizing the Academic Stress Scale. It identified five stress dimensions and explored gender differences. The findings underscore the need for targeted intervention strategies by school psychologists and 452 counsellors to alleviate student stress effectively. Struthers et. al., 2000 explores the role of academic coping style and motivation in mediating academic stress and performance among college students. Problem focused coping and motivation were found to positively influence course grades, while emotion-focused coping showed no significant effect. Strategies for enhancing effective coping in college students are suggested based on these findings. Misra et. al., 2000 investigated academic stress perceptions among college students and faculty, revealing a notable discrepancy between their perspectives. Faculty perceived higher student stress levels and reactions than students reported. Stress variations across academic years and genders were observed. The findings underscore the need for enhanced faculty-student interactions to address these disparities effectively. Two scales were used for this study Perceived Stress Scale and Brief COPE Questionnaire to highlight the underlying factors influencing students' well-being. Data collection was done via the usage of Google Forms and later Excel was used for all the later interpretations were noted down. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to study the relationship.

The correlation analysis between perceived stress levels and coping strategies, as measured by the two questionnaires use, following are the important findings from the study:
Active coping showed a strong negative correlation with perceived stress levels showing that individuals who di active coping experienced lower levels of stress. Planning showed a negative correlation the association was not statistically significant suggesting that the efficacy of planning may vary among individuals. Positive reframing was similar to active coping concluding that students who adopt a positive outlook on stressful situations experience lower levels of perceived stress. Acceptance also showed a negative correlation suggesting that accepting situations as they come may contribute to lower perceived stress. Seeking emotional support may not always be effective in alleviating perceived stress as the association was marginally significant. Seeking Instrument Support was not statistically significant suggesting limited effectiveness in reducing perceived stress scales. Self-distraction was also not statistically significant suggesting that distractions may not help an individual in reducing stress. Denial was also not statistically significant showing that it may not affect the perceived stress levels. Venting showed a significant positive correlation, meaning negative emotions lead to high perceived stress. Behavioural disengagement has a positive correlation meaning that disengaging from stressful situations may worsen the perceived stress levels. Self-blame showed a positive correlation suggesting that blaming oneself under stressful situations may contribute to higher stress levels. Religion showed a positive correlation suggesting that the association was not significant stating that religious coping may not constantly influence perceived stress levels. Humor showed a strong positive correlation indicating that humor as a coping mechanism may show high stress levels. Substance use suggests that relying on harmful substances is strongly associated with higher perceived stress.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to find the relationship between perceived stress and coping strategies among university students using the perceived stress scale and Brief COPE questionnaire. Stress is the physiological and psychological response to any situation in the environment.

The correlation analysis between perceived stress levels and coping strategies, as measured by the usage of two questionnaire use, following are the important findings from the study:

- Active coping showed a strong negative correlation with perceived stress levels showing that individuals who do active coping experienced lower levels of stress.
- Planning showed a negative correlation the association was not statistically significant suggesting that the efficacy of planning may vary among individuals.
- Positive reframing was similar to active coping concluding that students who adopt a positive outlook on stressful situations experience lower levels of perceived stress.
- Acceptance also showed a negative correlation suggesting that accepting situations as they come may contribute to lower perceived stress.
- Seeking emotional support may not always be effective in alleviating perceived stress as the association was marginally significant.
- Seeking Instrument Support was not statistically significant suggesting that limited effectiveness in reducing perceived stress scales.
- Self-distraction was also not statistically significant suggesting that distractions may not help an individual reducing stress.
- Denial was also not statistically significant showing that it may not affect the perceived stress levels.
- Venting showed a significant positive correlation, meaning negative emotions lead to high perceived stress.
- Behavioural disengagement has a positive correlation meaning that disengaging from stressful situations may worsen the perceived stress levels.
- Self-blame showed a positive correlation suggesting that blaming oneself under stressful situations may contribute to higher stress levels.
- Religion showed a positive correlation suggesting that the association was not significant stating that religious coping may not constantly influence perceived stress levels.
- Humor showed a strong positive correlation indicating that humor as a coping mechanism may show high-stress levels.
- Substance use suggest that relying on harmful substances is strongly associated with higher perceived stress.

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***Conflict of Interest***

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