

Psychological Well-being among Adolescents in context with Coping with Stress, Optimism and Resilience

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ABSTRACT

The empirical investigation under reference intended to examine the status of psychological well-being among adolescents in context with coping with perceived stress optimism and resilience. It was hypothesized that adolescents belonging to (i) high and low groups of coping with perceived stress, (ii) optimism/pessimism and (iii) high and low resilience groups, will differ significantly in terms of their psychological well-being. For the purpose, 100 adolescents were selected from among 10 + 2 high schools of Muzaffarpur using purposive sampling. The respondents were administered Coping with Stress Scale and Resilience Scale both by Shruti Narayan and Professor Vijaya Lakshmi, Optimism/Pessimism Scale by Parasar and Psychological Well-being Scale by Sisodia and Chaudhary to measure the variables. Besides these PDS was used to seek the personal information about the respondents. The obtained data were analysed using t-test. The results supported the hypotheses. It was found that adolescents belonging to adaptive coping with perceived stress, optimistic and high resilient groups excelled in their psychological well-being. Thus, it was concluded that psychological well-being is the function of coping with perceived stress, optimism/pessimism and resilience.

Keywords: *Psychological well-being, Coping with a stress, Optimism/Pessimism, Resilience*

Adolescence is a period of profound physical, emotional, and social development, marked by a range of challenges that can influence mental health and well-being (Steinberg, 2014; Santrock, 2016). During this critical phase, adolescents experience numerous stressors, such as academic pressure, identity formation, peer relationships, and family dynamics (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001). The ability to navigate these stressors is integral to maintaining psychological well-being, which refers to the positive aspects of mental health, including life satisfaction, self-esteem, and emotional balance (Ryff, 1989). Key factors that contribute to psychological well-being during adolescence include coping with stress, cultivating optimism, and building resilience (Seligman, 2011; Masten, 2001). Together, these elements play a vital role in helping young individuals adapt to the demands of this stage of life and establish a foundation for future mental health.

Psychological well-being (PWB) refers to an individual's overall mental state, encompassing aspects like emotional health, life satisfaction, and personal growth (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). It

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Psychological Well-being among Adolescents in context with Coping with Stress, Optimism and Resilience

involves the ability to experience positive emotions, have fulfilling relationships, maintain a sense of purpose, and achieve personal goals (Diener, 2000). During adolescence, the foundation for psychological well-being is laid, as young people learn to manage the challenges they face and develop coping mechanisms that will serve them throughout life (Erikson, 1968). Adolescence is often a turbulent time, with shifts in cognitive abilities, social interactions, and emotional regulation (Steinberg, 2014). These developmental changes can either enhance or detract from an adolescent's psychological well-being. Adolescents with strong coping skills, a positive outlook on life, and the ability to recover from setbacks are more likely to experience better mental health outcomes (Compas et al., 2001; Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010). On the other hand, those who struggle with stress or lack the tools to cope effectively may be more vulnerable to mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Hankin & Abramson, 2001).

Stress is an inevitable part of life, and adolescence is no exception. Adolescents face unique stressors, such as academic expectations, peer pressure, family conflicts, and the quest for independence (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Compas et al., 2001). How adolescents cope with these stressors has a significant impact on their psychological well-being. Coping strategies are the methods individuals use to manage stress, either by reducing or managing its negative effects (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). There are two broad categories of coping strategies: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Problem-focused coping involves taking active steps to address or resolve the source of stress, while emotion-focused coping involves managing the emotional responses to stress. Adolescents who use problem-focused strategies tend to have better mental health outcomes because they feel more in control and capable of handling stressors (Compas et al., 2001). On the other hand, adolescents who rely primarily on emotion-focused coping, especially maladaptive strategies like avoidance or denial, may be more susceptible to stress-related mental health issues (Seiffge-Krenke, 2000). The ability to cope effectively with stress is closely linked to psychological well-being. Adolescents with healthy coping strategies experience lower levels of anxiety and depression and tend to have higher self-esteem and life satisfaction (Frydenberg & Lewis, 2009). Interventions that promote adaptive coping skills—such as mindfulness, cognitive restructuring, and problem-solving techniques—can enhance psychological well-being by helping adolescents manage stress more effectively (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Kendall, 2011).

Optimism, or the general tendency to expect positive outcomes in life, is another crucial factor that influences psychological well-being in adolescence (Scheier & Carver, 1985; Seligman, 2011). Research has shown that adolescents who are optimistic tend to have better mental health, higher life satisfaction, and stronger resilience in the face of adversity (Carver et al., 2010). Optimism helps adolescents maintain a positive outlook, even when confronted with challenges, and encourages them to believe that they can overcome difficulties (Peterson, 2000). Optimistic adolescents are more likely to engage in active problem-solving and seek out support when faced with stress (Carver et al., 2010). They also tend to have higher self-esteem, which is a key component of psychological well-being (Diener, 2000). Moreover, optimism acts as a protective factor against the development of mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety (Seligman, 2011). When adolescents adopt an optimistic mindset, they view setbacks as temporary and solvable, which reduces feelings of helplessness and promotes a sense of agency and control over their lives (Peterson, 2000). In contrast, adolescents who exhibit pessimism or a tendency to expect negative outcomes may experience greater vulnerability to stress and mental health issues (Hankin & Abramson, 2001). Pessimistic

Psychological Well-being among Adolescents in context with Coping with Stress, Optimism and Resilience

thinking patterns can contribute to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, undermining psychological well-being and increasing the likelihood of developing conditions like depression.

Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back from adversity, adapt to challenges, and maintain a sense of psychological equilibrium (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2006). During adolescence, developing resilience is particularly important, as it helps individuals navigate the inevitable setbacks and difficulties they encounter (Masten, 2014). Resilience is not an inborn trait but rather a set of behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be cultivated over time (Rutter, 2006). Resilient adolescents tend to maintain a positive sense of self, manage their emotions effectively, and exhibit adaptive coping strategies when facing stress (Masten, 2001). They are more likely to thrive despite challenges and to see difficulties as opportunities for growth rather than as insurmountable obstacles (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Resilience contributes to psychological well-being by fostering a sense of hope and determination, which can buffer against the negative effects of stress (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Several factors contribute to resilience in adolescence, including supportive relationships, a strong sense of self-efficacy, and the ability to maintain perspective in the face of adversity (Bandura, 1997; Masten, 2014). Adolescents who have a positive relationship with family members, peers, and mentors tend to demonstrate greater resilience, as these relationships provide emotional support, guidance, and encouragement (Werner & Smith, 1992). Moreover, promoting resilience through skills training and social-emotional learning programs can enhance psychological well-being by helping adolescents develop the tools they need to cope with life's challenges (Durlak et al., 2011).

Coping with stress, optimism, and resilience are all interconnected factors that contribute to psychological well-being in adolescence (Carver et al., 2010; Masten, 2001). Adolescents who are resilient and optimistic are more likely to use adaptive coping strategies when faced with stress, thereby protecting their mental health and enhancing their well-being (Seligman, 2011). Furthermore, a positive outlook on life and the ability to bounce back from adversity foster a sense of self-efficacy, which in turn strengthens psychological well-being (Bandura, 1997).

In conclusion, adolescence is a formative period in the development of psychological well-being, and the ability to cope with stress, cultivate optimism, and build resilience plays a critical role in shaping an adolescent's mental health (Steinberg, 2014; Masten, 2014). By fostering these qualities, we can help adolescents navigate the challenges of this stage in life and equip them with the tools necessary for maintaining well-being throughout adulthood (Seligman, 2011). Mental health professionals, educators, and parents can support adolescents by providing them with the resources, guidance, and encouragement needed to develop these vital coping mechanisms and strengths (Durlak et al., 2011). In doing so, we can promote positive mental health and well-being during one of the most crucial developmental stages of life.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anand and Nagle (2016) examined perceived stress as a predictor of psychological well-being among Indian youth. Their findings indicated that higher levels of perceived stress were significantly associated with lower psychological well-being. The study emphasized that stress negatively influences emotional balance, life satisfaction, and overall mental health. The authors concluded that effective stress management strategies are essential to enhance psychological well-being among young individuals in the Indian socio-cultural context.

Psychological Well-being among Adolescents in context with Coping with Stress, Optimism and Resilience

Bouchard et al. (2017) explored the relationship between optimism, health, and well-being from a positive psychology perspective. The study highlighted optimism as a crucial personality trait that promotes adaptive coping, better physical health, and enhanced psychological well-being. Optimistic individuals were found to handle stress more effectively and maintain higher levels of life satisfaction. The authors suggested that fostering optimism can be an important psychological resource for promoting overall well-being.

Burris et al. (2009) investigated factors associated with psychological well-being and distress among university students. The study found that academic pressure, social support, and coping strategies significantly influenced students' mental health. Higher levels of social support and effective coping were linked with better psychological well-being, whereas high stress levels predicted psychological distress. The authors emphasized the need for institutional support systems to improve students' emotional adjustment and mental health.

Campbell-Sills, Cohan, and Stein (2006) examined the relationship between resilience, personality, coping, and psychiatric symptoms in young adults. The study reported that higher resilience was associated with adaptive coping styles, positive personality traits, and lower psychiatric symptoms. Resilient individuals demonstrated better emotional regulation and psychological well-being. The findings suggested that resilience functions as a protective factor against stress and mental health problems among young adults.

Fawzy and Hamed (2017) assessed the prevalence of psychological stress, depression, and anxiety among medical students in Egypt. The study revealed high levels of stress and psychological distress among students due to academic and clinical demands. Elevated stress levels were associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression, negatively affecting psychological well-being. The authors recommended psychological support programs and stress-management interventions to improve students' mental health.

Haleh et al. (2018) investigated factors associated with perceived stress and psychological well-being among Iranian female adolescents. The results showed that higher perceived stress significantly predicted lower levels of psychological well-being. Social support, family environment, and personal coping skills were identified as important factors influencing stress and well-being. The study concluded that enhancing coping strategies and supportive environments could improve adolescents' psychological health.

Karademas (2006) explored the relationships among self-efficacy, social support, optimism, and psychological well-being. The study found that optimism mediated the relationship between self-efficacy, social support, and well-being. Individuals with strong self-efficacy beliefs and supportive social networks tended to be more optimistic, which in turn enhanced their psychological well-being. The findings highlighted optimism as a key psychological mechanism linking personal and social resources to well-being.

Malik et al. (2020) examined the relationship between stress and psychological well-being among foundation students. The study revealed a significant negative relationship between perceived stress and psychological well-being. Students experiencing higher stress reported lower life satisfaction and emotional stability. The authors emphasized the importance of stress-reduction programs and psychological support services in educational institutions to improve students' overall well-being.

Psychological Well-being among Adolescents in context with Coping with Stress, Optimism and Resilience

Panchal, Mukherjee, and Kumar (2016) investigated optimism in relation to well-being, resilience, and perceived stress. The findings indicated that optimism was positively correlated with psychological well-being and resilience, and negatively related to perceived stress. Optimistic individuals were more capable of coping with stressful situations and maintaining emotional balance. The study concluded that optimism serves as a protective factor that enhances resilience and promotes psychological well-being.

Parveen, Maqbool, and Khan (2016) examined optimism as a predictor of psychological well-being among adolescents. The results showed that higher optimism significantly predicted greater psychological well-being. Optimistic adolescents reported better emotional stability, life satisfaction, and positive self-perception. The authors concluded that optimism is a vital psychological resource that contributes to adolescents' mental health and recommended interventions to foster optimistic thinking patterns.

Roslan et al. (2017) studied psychological well-being among postgraduate students. The findings indicated that academic pressure, social relationships, and coping strategies significantly influenced students' psychological well-being. Students with better coping skills and supportive social environments demonstrated higher levels of well-being. The study emphasized the importance of academic counseling and mental health support services to enhance postgraduate students' psychological adjustment.

Smejkalová (2018) examined the effects of perceived stress and resilience on academic performance. The study found that high perceived stress negatively affected academic outcomes, whereas resilience served as a protective factor that enhanced performance and psychological well-being. Students with higher resilience were better able to manage stress and maintain emotional stability. The research highlighted the importance of resilience-building programs in academic settings.

Souri and Hasanirad (2011) explored the relationship between resilience, optimism, and psychological well-being among medical students. The results indicated strong positive correlations among resilience, optimism, and well-being. Students with higher optimism and resilience levels demonstrated better emotional health and life satisfaction. The authors concluded that both optimism and resilience are significant psychological resources that promote mental health and protect against stress.

Strizhitskaya (2019) examined the relationship between perceived stress and psychological well-being, focusing on the role of emotional stability. The study found that emotional stability moderated the impact of stress on well-being. Individuals with higher emotional stability experienced less negative impact of stress on their psychological health. The findings suggested that personality traits play a crucial role in buffering the adverse effects of stress. Yee Ho, Cheung, and Cheung (2010) investigated the roles of meaning in life and optimism in promoting psychological well-being. The results showed that both meaning in life and optimism significantly predicted higher levels of well-being. Individuals who perceived their lives as meaningful and maintained optimistic attitudes reported greater life satisfaction and emotional balance. The study emphasized the importance of positive cognitive orientations in enhancing psychological well-being.

Psychological Well-being among Adolescents in context with Coping with Stress, Optimism and Resilience

Objectives

1. To compare adolescents belonging to adaptive and maladaptive coping with stress on the measure psychological well-being.
2. To compare adolescents belonging to optimism / pessimism on the measure psychological well-being.
3. To compare adolescents belonging to high & low resilience groups on the measure psychological well-being.

Hypotheses

1. Adolescents belonging to adaptive & maladaptive coping with perceived stress group will differ significantly in terms of their psychological well-being.
2. Adolescents belonging to optimistic and pessimistic group will differ significantly on the measure psychological well-being.
3. Adolescents belonging to high and low resilience groups will differ significantly on the measure psychological well-being.

METHOD OF STUDY

Sample

100 adolescents selected from among different 10+2 high schools of urban Muzaffarpur constituted the sample. They were selected based on purposive sampling. The sample was matched other than the conditions required for investigation under reference.

Research Design

The present investigation comprised of three independent variables (coping with stress, optimism / pessimism and resilience) for the dependent variable (psychological well-being). The respondents constituted six groups (two of each independent variable) having independent subjects to each group to be compared in terms of dependent variable. Therefore, between group design was preferred.

Tools

- i) A Self-prepared Personal Data Sheet was used to seek the personal and background information of the respondent.
- ii) Coping with stress (adaptive and maladaptive) was measured using Stress Coping Scale developed by Vijya Laxmi and Shruti Narain.
- iii) Optimism Scale by Upinder Dhar and Manisha Jain was used to measure optimism - pessimism continuum of the respondents.
- iv) Resilience Scale developed by Prof. Vijya Laxmi and Dr. Shruti Narain was used to measure resilience among the respondents.
- v) Psychological Well-being Scale by Sisodia DS and Chaudhary Pooja was used to measure psychological well-being among adolescent respondents constituting the sample.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Table-01 Mean, SD, and t-value between adolescents belonging to adaptive and maladaptive coping with perceived stress on psychological well-being.

Variable	Coping with Stress	N	Mean	SD	t-value (df = 98)	P
PWB	Maladaptive	66	167.84	7.22	15.78	<.01
	Adaptive	34	190.25	6.43		

It is clear from the result table-1 that adaptive and maladaptive coping with perceived stress groups of adolescents differ significantly in terms of their psychological well-being. Adolescents belonging to adaptive coping with perceived stress manifested higher mean (Mean = 190.25) as compared to maladaptive coping with perceived stress group of adolescents (Mean = 167.84). The difference between the means was found significant ($t = 15.78$; $df = 98$; $p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis no. (1) is retained. The findings were interpreted on the ground of the characteristics of adaptive / maladaptive coping with stress technique influencing various parameters of psychological well-being.

Adolescents who utilize adaptive coping strategies generally excel in psychological well-being compared to those who rely on maladaptive coping techniques due to the constructive nature of their responses to stress. Adaptive coping involves proactive and positive methods for managing stress, such as problem-solving, seeking social support, and engaging in healthy activities like exercise or mindfulness. These approaches enable adolescents to address challenges effectively, build resilience, and maintain a sense of control over their circumstances, all of which contribute to enhanced emotional stability and overall mental health. In contrast, maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance, denial, or substance use, tend to exacerbate stress and lead to negative emotional outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and feelings of helplessness. This ineffective management of stress can hinder personal growth and create a cycle of distress that adversely affects psychological well-being. Therefore, the ability to adaptively cope with stress fosters greater emotional regulation, stronger relationships, and a more positive outlook on life, allowing these adolescents to thrive despite adversity.

Table-02 Mean, SD, and t-value between adolescents belonging to optimism / pessimism on psychological well-being.

Variable	Optimism / Pessimism	N	Mean	SD	t-value (df = 98)	P
PWB	Optimism	42	191.62	6.38	15.62	<.01
	Pessimism	58	169.59	7.74		

It is clear from the findings of table-2 that adolescents belonging to optimistic and pessimistic groups differ significantly from one another on psychological well-being measure. Optimistic group of adolescents manifested comparatively higher mean (Mean = 191.62) than pessimistic group of adolescents (Mean = 169.59) on psychological well-being measure. The difference between the means was found significant ($t = 15.62$; $df = 98$; $p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis no. (2) is retained. The findings were interpreted in terms of the characteristics of optimism / pessimism continuous associated with psychological well-being.

Psychological Well-being among Adolescents in context with Coping with Stress, Optimism and Resilience

Optimistic adolescents tend to excel in psychological well-being compared to their pessimistic peers due to their positive outlook on life and proactive approach to challenges. Optimism fosters resilience, allowing these individuals to view setbacks as temporary obstacles rather than insurmountable problems, which enhance their ability to cope with stress and adversity. This hopeful perspective not only promotes better emotional regulation but also encourages the pursuit of goals and engagement in activities that lead to personal fulfillment and happiness. Furthermore, optimistic adolescents are more likely to seek social support and build strong relationships, which are crucial for mental health and overall well-being. In contrast, pessimistic adolescents may struggle with negative thinking patterns, leading to feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and depression, which can undermine their self-esteem and motivation. Consequently, the positive mindset associated with optimism significantly contributes to improved psychological resilience, emotional stability, and a greater sense of life satisfaction among adolescents.

Table-03 Mean, SD, and t-value between adolescents belonging to high and moderate resilience on PWB.

Variable	Resilience	N	Mean	SD	t-value (df = 98)	P
PWB	High	37	194.87	5.98	17.29	<.01
	Moderate	63	170.49	8.12		

The results displayed in table-3 are related to making a comparison of adolescents of high and low resilience groups on psychological well-being. It is clear from the result that the two groups of adolescents differ significantly from each other on psychological well-being measure. High resilient group of adolescents manifested higher mean (Mean = 194.87) than moderate resilience group of adolescents (Mean = 170.49). The two means differed significantly from each other on psychological well-being ($t = 17.29$; $df = 98$; $p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis no. (3) is retained. The findings were interpreted on the characteristics of resilience connected with psychological well-being measure.

Adolescents with high resilience tend to excel in psychological well-being compared to those with moderate or low resilience due to their enhanced ability to adapt to challenges and bounce back from adversity. High-resilient individuals possess effective coping strategies, strong problem-solving skills, and a positive mindset that allows them to navigate stressors with confidence and resourcefulness. This adaptability fosters a greater sense of control over their lives, which is crucial for maintaining emotional stability and mental health. Furthermore, resilient adolescents are more likely to view difficulties as opportunities for growth, leading to increased self-efficacy and a proactive approach to challenges. In contrast, those with moderate or low resilience may struggle to cope with setbacks, often experiencing feelings of helplessness and a lack of motivation, which can negatively impact their mental health. Consequently, the strong emotional fortitude and positive coping mechanisms of highly resilient adolescents contribute to their overall psychological well-being, enabling them to thrive despite life's challenges.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

The study was limited by its cross-sectional nature, which restricted its ability to examine changes and causal relationships over time. In addition, the use of a diverse sample may have introduced variability in responses due to differences in cultural and demographic

Psychological Well-being among Adolescents in context with Coping with Stress, Optimism and Resilience

backgrounds. The findings were also based on self-reported data, which may be subject to personal bias. Taking consideration to the above limitations future research should include longitudinal studies and larger representative samples to enhance the reliability and generalizability of the findings. Besides this, future studies should also explore additional psychological, social, and cultural variables using both quantitative and qualitative methods for deeper understanding of the relationships between the variables.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that adaptive coping with perceived stress contributes positively to psychological well-being, whereas maladaptive coping hinders its growth. Similarly, optimism is associated with higher psychological well-being, while pessimism interferes with its development. Resilience also plays a crucial role, as adolescents with high resilience demonstrate better psychological well-being compared to those with moderate or low resilience. Thus, adaptive coping, optimism, and high resilience collectively promote healthier psychological functioning among adolescents.

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Conflict of Interest

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