

## Appraisal-focused coping style among Adolescent girls: Role of Anxiety, Depression and Personality

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### ABSTRACT

An attempt was made in the present investigation to study the role of anxiety, depression and personality on appraisal- focused coping style on a sample of 400 adolescent girls selected randomly in the age group of 14-17 years, studying in secondary schools of chittoor district of A.P. Data were collected by using Anxiety scale (Sinha, 1989), Depression Scale (Karim and Rama Tiwari, 1986), Personality Inventory (Williams, 1998) and Coping Styles scale (Kumar and Sreenivas, 1998). A 2x2x2 factorial design was employed. ANOVA was used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed that anxiety, depression and personality have significant influence on appraisal- focused coping style among adolescent girls. Adolescent girls with type-A personality, low anxiety and mild depression have used appraisal- focused coping style more frequently than the girls with type B personality, high anxiety and moderate depression.

**Keywords:** *Adolescent girls, Role of Anxiety, Depression and Personality*

The State of World Children, UNICEF reported that around 20 per cent of the world's adolescents have a mental health or behavioral problem. Depression is said to be single largest contributor to the global burden of disease among people aged 15–19 years.

Adolescent girls tend to experience feelings of stress more strongly than those of adolescent boys. Often a decrease in self-esteem affects females as they progress through adolescence (Spear, 2000). Depression and anxiety levels increase during adolescence (Spear, 2000), although researchers are still unclear as to why. Some researchers point to gender differences in hormone patterns, an increase in stress, and different rates of development in cognition and coping mechanisms (Steinberg and Morris, 2001).

It is true that the frequency of some negative emotions rise during adolescence. For example, feelings of depression increase from childhood to adulthood, with anxiety and self-consciousness climaxing during the time period of adolescence (Spear, 2000). Emerging biological changes exacerbate heightened stress levels of adolescence. New cognitive skills and coping strategies continue to develop throughout adolescence (Steinberg and Morris,

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2006). The multilayered stress occurring in adolescence can sometimes overwhelm nascent coping skills (Spear, 2000). Sometimes the inability to cope with new stressors, such as physical, academic, and social changes may be attributed to unresolved issues of childhood such as separation anxiety (Cicchetti and Rogosch, 2002). It is important to not only focus on sources of normative stress in adolescence, but it is equally important to study how adolescents who experience high levels of stress overcome adversity and develop into successful adults.

Several studies are unanimous in considering depression as a very common pathology in childhood and adolescence. The heterogeneity of depressive symptoms is related to different periods of childhood/ adolescence - that is, when they begin co morbidity (Harrington and Rutter, 1996; Mash and Wolfe, 2002). Anxiety appears as a common, functional and transitory experience and its nature and intensity can vary to a large extent, depending on the individuals' period of development, allowing in this sense, children and adolescents to engage in new, unexpected or dangerous situations (Rosen & Schulkin, 1998). However, the intensity of anxiety can increase and often become chronic and dysfunctional from a social point of view.

The term "coping" refers broadly the efforts to manage environmental and internal demands and conflicts among demands (Lazarus, 1966). The definition focuses explicitly on efforts to manage, that is, on the dynamic constellation of thoughts and acts that constitute the coping processes. Coping has been broadly categorized into problem-focused, appraisal focused and emotion-focused coping. In problem –focused coping, the individual works to change the circumstances causing stress, such as if the main stressors is the fear of failing an exam, problem solving strategies could be; putting extra efforts towards learning that subject or working extra hard to gain marks in other ways as class work or home works.

In appraisal focused coping the person analyze the problem and finds solution, redefine the problem to find something favorable or avoid the problem mentally. In emotion-focused coping, the person works and tries to minimize the stress caused by the stresses such as; relaxation techniques, crying, yelling etc.

Adolescents respond to stressors according to their appraisals, using active strategies, persistence, exertion, problem-solving, cognitive distraction or seeking social support. Developing effective and positive coping behaviour is one way to manage all the stressors during transformation from childhood till adolescence. Coping may become more sophisticated as children experience more opportunities for social learning and modeling (Eisenberg et al., 2004).

Several attempts were made by researchers to describe factors related to coping styles in adolescent girls. But only a few attempts were made to investigate the psychological factors related to coping styles among adolescent girls. It is also noted that only meager and negligible probe has been made to explore the impact of personality, anxiety and depression on appraisal focused coping styles adolescent girls in India. The need is strongly felt to explore this complex and intricate problem. Hence the research investigation has contemplated. In view of the above, the present study was planned with the following objective.

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- To find out the impact of anxiety, depression and personality on appraisal focused coping style.

### ***Hypotheses***

In order to realize the objective of the study the following hypotheses were formulated.

1. Personality would significantly influence the appraisal- focused coping style
2. Anxiety would significantly influence the appraisal-focused coping style.
3. Depression would significantly influence the appraisal- - focused coping style.

## **METHOD**

### ***Sample***

Sample of the study consisted of 400 adolescent girls in the age group of 14-17 years; studying in government and private schools in chittoor district of A.P. Technique of simple randomization was employed for the selection of the subjects.

### **Tools**

Each subject in the sample was administered the following Scales and inventories.

- 1. Anxiety scale** (Sinha, 1989)
- 2. Depression scale** (Shamin Karim and Rama Tiwari,1986)
- 3. Personality inventory** (Jagadish and Srivastava, 1983)
- 4. Coping styles Scale** (Kumar and sreenivas, 1998)

Instructions pertaining to all these instruments were given in Telugu, the mother tongue of the subjects and the responses were noted by the investigator. In order to verify the information pertaining to the subject, the knowledgeable persons like school teachers were contacted. A test- retest correlation on 30 individuals with an interval of 15 days was found to be 0.84 for anxiety, 0.79 for depression, 0.82 for personality and 0.80 for coping styles.

400 Students were administered anxiety, depression, and personality and coping styles scales in a group of 30 each in two sessions and they were explained the significance of the study in greater detail as to how they should fill in the questionnaires. The researcher was with them till they completed the questionnaires. The doubts raised by the some of the students were dissipated. They were given sufficient time to fill in the questionnaires. The filled in questionnaires were collected from the students and their responses were scored accordingly. Based on the scores they were classified into students with low anxiety, high anxiety, mild depression and moderate depression and students with type A and B personality in such a way that they fit into a 2X2X2 factorial design.. Thus 400 students constituted the sample of the present study.

### ***Analysis of Data:***

The obtained data have been treated statistically in order to test the hypotheses. The Means and SDs (Standard Deviations) of the scores were calculated. To find out the influence and interaction effect of the variables, the data were subjected to ANOVA (Analysis of Variance).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Appraisal focused coping style**

An observation of Table-I indicates the mean scores of appraisal-focused coping style in relation to personality, anxiety and depression. Appraisal-focused coping involves attempts to define the meaning of a situation and includes such strategies as logical analysis, cognitive

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redefinition and cognitive avoidance. They include trying to identify the cause of the problem, paying attention to one aspect of the situation at a time, drawing relevant past experience, mentally rehashing possible actions and their consequence, accepting the reality of the situation and restructuring it to find something favorable, denying fear or anxiety under stress, trying to forget the situation and engaging in wishful fantasies, instead of thinking realistically about the problem.

**Table-I: Means and SDs for scores on Appraisal - focused coping style.**

Depression		Personality			
		Type-A		Type-B	
		Anxiety		Anxiety	
		Low	High	Low	High
Low	<b>Mean</b>	<b>30.89</b>	30.16	29.21	28.60
	<b>SD</b>	6.52	5.46	60.61	5.34
Moderate	<b>Mean</b>	29.33	28.74	28.76	<b>27.05</b>
	<b>SD</b>	6.27	4.63	5.51	4.63

### Grand Means

Type-A Personality = (M:29.79)	Low Anxiety = (M:29.54)
Type-B Personality = (M:28.40)	High Anxiety = (M:28.63)
Mild Depression = (M:29.71)	
Moderate Depression = (M:28.47)	

When we look into the means of appraisal focused coping style of girl students from the table-I, the subjects with type 'A' personality, low anxiety and mild depression obtained a high score of 30.89 indicates that they used appraisal focused coping style more frequently compared to other groups. Subjects with type 'B' personality, high anxiety and moderate depression obtained a low score of 27.05 indicates that they used appraisal focused coping style less frequently compared to other groups.

The influence of personality on appraisal focused coping styles is as follows: Subjects with type 'A' personality (M=29.79) used appraisal focused coping style more frequently than the subjects with type 'B' personality (M=28.40). In terms of anxiety, subjects with low anxiety (M=29.54) used appraisal focused coping style more frequently than the subjects with high anxiety (M=28.63). In terms of depression, subjects with low depression (M=29.71) used appraisal coping style more frequently than the subjects with moderate depression (M=28.47).

As there are differences in the mean scores of the groups related to appraisal focused coping style, in order to test whether personality, anxiety and depression have any significant influence on appraisal-focused coping style among adolescent girls, the data were further subjected to factorial analysis of variance and the results are presented in Table-II.

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**Table-II: Summary of ANOVA for scores on Appraisal- focused Coping style.**

Source of Variance	Sum Squares	df	MSS	F-Values
Personality (A)	218.523	1	218.523	5.38 *
Anxiety (B)	315.062	1	315.062	7.76**
Depression (C)	257.503	1	257.503	6.34 **
(A x B)	283.923	1	283.923	7.00**
(A x C)	157.122	1	157.122	6.19**
(B x C)	210.563	1	210.563	5.20*
(A x B x C)	255.803	1	255.803	6.30**
Within	15898.580	392	40.558	--
Total	17597.080	399	--	--

\*\* - Significant at 0.01 level

\* - Significant at 0.05 level

***Hypotheses-1: Personality type would significantly influence appraisal focused coping style among adolescent girls.***

It is evident from table-II that the obtained ‘F’ value for personality is 5.38 and it is significant at 0.01 level indicates that personality has significant influence on appraisal focused coping styles among adolescent girls. Between type A and Type B personalities, it is the subjects with type A personality who have used appraisal focused coping style more frequently than the subjects with type B personality.

As the ‘F’ value is significant, the hypothesis-1, which stated that ***personality type would significantly influence appraisal coping styles*** among adolescent girls, is accepted as warranted by the results.

Lazarus cognitive phenomenological theory of psychological distress suggested that personality influence the type of coping style the person engage in. In the present investigation subjects with type-A personality used appraisal coping style more frequently than the subjects with type-B personality. The probable reason is that the adolescent girls with optimistic and positive personalities are more likely to appraise a stressful situation more positively and consequently engage in pro-active coping style. In contrast more pessimistic, fearful, anxious individuals are more likely to appraise a stressful situation as negative and underestimate their ability to deal with the stressor which leads to stress and mal adaptive coping.

Type-A individuals evaluate themselves as efficient, high achievers, tough involved. This achievement oriented approach to life, high ego centered and personal control (Latha, 2000). Many research studies theorized that the Type A behavior pattern (TABP) was composed of a pattern of competitive, hard driving behavior and a predisposition to interact with others in a hostile manner (Kupper and Denollet, 2007).

Type A personalities are more prone to stress. When they are confronted with more problems or stresses they use more of cognitive avoidance coping style which is a type of appraisal focused coping and try to forget the situation and engage in wishful fantasies, instead of

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thinking realistically about the problem. So only, subjects with type-A personality used more of appraisal coping style than the subjects with type B personality.

***Hypotheses-2: Anxiety would significantly influence appraisal focused coping style among adolescent girls.***

It is evident from table-II that the obtained 'F' value for personality is 7.76 and it is significant at 0.01 level indicates that anxiety has significant influence on appraisal focused coping style among adolescent girls. Between the girls with high and low anxiety, it is the subjects with low anxiety who have used appraisal focused coping style more frequently than the subjects with high anxiety.

As the 'F' value is significant, the hypothesis-II, which stated that ***Anxiety would significantly influence appraisal coping style*** among adolescent girls, is accepted as warranted by the results.

Anxiety corrupts a person's ability to think, perceive and learn. A student suffering from anxiety usually experience difficulties in concentrating, remembering the learned material and establishing what the necessary relations among events.

In India, the main documented cause of anxiety among school children and an adolescent is parents' high educational expectations and pressure for academic achievement. Academic stress/pressure, parental expectations and competition make the students to experience high anxiety which in turn leads to inability to concentrate, difficulty in making decisions, extreme sensitivity, discouragement, sleep disturbances, excessive sweating, sustained muscle tension, over sensitive in interpersonal relationships, and frequently feels inadequate and depressed. Their high level of tension is often reflected in strained postural movements, over reaction to sudden or unexpected stimuli and continual nervous movements.

Zeidner (1995) suggested that active avoidance coping/ cognitive avoidance coping styles have been found to be associated with higher levels of anxiety. The findings of the present study also indicate that denial or avoidance coping styles are positively correlated with high anxiety. Ejaz (2008) also found that active avoidance coping strategies are positively correlated with high anxiety.

Girls with low anxiety try to identify the cause of the problem, pay attention to one aspect of the situation at a time, draw relevant past experience, mentally rehash possible actions and their consequence, accept the reality of the situation and restructure it to find something favorable. So only girls with low anxiety used appraisal focused coping style more frequently than the girls with high anxiety.

***Hypothesis-3: Depression would significantly influence appraisal coping style among adolescent girls.***

As shown in table-II that the obtained 'F' value of 6.34 is significant at 0.01 levels indicates that depression has significant impact on appraisal coping styles among adolescent girls. Between the girls with mild and moderate depression, it is the subjects with moderate depression who have used appraisal focused coping styles more frequently than the subjects with mild depression. As the 'F' value is significant, the hypothesis-3, which stated that ***depression would significantly influence appraisal coping styles among adolescent girls***, is accepted as warranted by the results.

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The level of depression depends on the intensity of stress, In Indian schools most the students experience academic stress and pressure consequently they get depressed and may have Persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, worthlessness, or emptiness, irritability, frustration, or restlessness, loss of interest in activities or hobbies that used to be enjoyable, fatigue and lack of energy, difficulty thinking clearly, remembering, concentrating, or making decisions, recurrent thoughts of death or suicide, physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, or back pain. When the level of depression is low people can seek information or advice from others and solve the problems on their own. When the depression level increases or becomes severe they fail to solve and try to deny or avoid the problem from their mind. So only girls with moderate depression used appraisal focused style more frequently than the girls with mild depression.

The results of the present investigation corroborate with the earlier findings of Holahan and Moos (1991) who stated that the people with moderate or severe depression are more passive and deal with wishful thoughts and have avoidance state in stressing settings and blame themselves a lot.

### CONCLUSION

In summary, the present investigation reveals that personality, anxiety and depression have significant influence on appraisal focused coping styles. Adolescent girls with type A personality, low anxiety and mild depression have used appraisal focused coping style more frequently than the girls with type B personality, high anxiety and moderate depression.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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