

“Stress Coping Strategies and Life Achievement among University Students”

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ABSTRACT

Present study aims at estimating the relationship between stress coping strategies and life achievement of students. The sample size of this study consists of 205 students that were selected at random from science and art faculties of the Universities in Kerala. Stress Coping Strategies Inventory and Student's Life Expectation Scale were used to collect the data. Results illustrated that life significantly correlated with task focused and avoidance coping ($p < 0.01$), but emotion focused had not significant correlation with Expectation. The results of the stepwise regression revealed that avoidance coping ($p < 0.001$) was related with student's life Expectation and it accounted for 9.4% variance in life satisfaction of students. The results of t test illustrated that there was not any significant difference between art and science students on life Expectation, but female students scored higher on life Expectation scale as compared to male students i.e. female students was most satisfied with their life than male students.

KEY WORDS: *Stress Coping Strategies, Life Expectation, and Students.*

INTRODUCTION

Human beings have many biological, psychological and social needs and desires. When these needs and desires are not satisfied they experience stress and tension. Besides these needs and desires there are many challenges in human life and they all are likely to produce stress and tension. According to Selye (1978) "Stress is any external events or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium". As pressure build up, a person is said to be under stress when he/she runs out of recourses to manage them. If the amount of pressure become to great then individuals may begin to show physical or psychological symptoms that cannot only impede their work capabilities but also result in physical and or/ mental illness (Brown, Cooper and Kirkcaldy, 1996). Stress reactions vary by characteristics of the personality, social support structure, life experiences, years of service, level of education, use of coping strategies, the intensity of the stressful situation and any unique features of the organization (Rakshase, 2009).

Coping Resources

Coping resources refers to attempts to meet environmental demands in order to prevent negative consequences. Coping strategies can be grouped into two main types. i.e. problem focused coping and emotion focused coping. The first main approach includes any strategy to deal directly with the stressor through overt action or through realistic problem solving mental activities. In second approach, we do not look for ways of changing the stressful situation; instead we try to change our feelings and thoughts

about it. This strategy is called emotion regulation (Zimbardo, 1988; Rakshase, 2009). According to Osipow and Spokane (1998), the following personal coping resources are used: recreation, self-care, social support, rational coping and personal strain and these aspects are included in personal strain: Vocational strain, psychological strain, interpersonal strain and physical strain (Rakshase, 2009).

Life Expectation

Today the world is changing and these changes have positive and negative effects on individual's life, so some of them promote well-being and Life Expectation

of individual but sometimes these issues can reduce the individual's mental health and also coping with these changes is a big challenge. Investigators have suggested that life satisfaction and well-being must be regarded and some of them brought it into social sciences branches (Farooqi & Tamini, 2010). Life satisfaction was conceptualized as a key indicator of well being. In judging about the satisfaction with lives, individuals set a standard, which they perceive appropriate for circumstances of their lives (Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffin, 1985). It may be possible that a person is satisfied with almost all domains (e.g. health, wealth, marriage, education etc.) of his/her life but may still be not dissatisfied with a particular domain which he/she weights as most important and dissatisfaction with this particular domain may negatively affect his/her overall judgment about life satisfaction. Health has been recognized as one of the most important factor related to life satisfaction (Dubey, 2003). Although life Expectation appraised as life as a whole refers to stability but sufficient body of researches (Pavot, Diener & Suh, 1998) suggest that judgment based on temporal aspects is relatively more reliable and accurate. The temporality while evaluating life satisfaction focuses on the past, present and future levels of global life satisfaction. Positive thinking about future has important implications for how well a person might cope with his contrary conditions. Future orientation predicted significant positive variance in present, as well as, future satisfaction with life (Dubey & Agarwal, 2004). In the investigations an attempt has been made to identify effective coping strategies which lead to satisfaction with different temporal aspects of life even when one is afflicted with a chronic disease. Mayer and Diener (1995) refuted that 'satisfaction is less a matter of getting what you want than wanting what you have'. For example-after a period of adoption (about 3 months) even people who have experienced serious life events again report near baseline levels of well being (Suh, Deiner & Fujita, 1996).

Some of the researchers around the world have examined relationship between stress coping strategies and life satisfaction of students and results illustrated that stress coping strategies have had effect on life Expectation. In a study Dubey and Agarwal (2007) showed that the use of active coping strategies were effective in promoting the level of satisfaction as a whole and also the present and future satisfaction with life. Matheny et al. (2004) compared the perceived stress, life satisfaction, and coping resources of American and Turkish students, results did not differ significantly in regard to perceived stress, life satisfaction, or an overall measure of coping resources; however, they did differ significantly regarding specific coping resources. Variables entering regression models for predicting life satisfaction differed for students in the two countries and for the sexes within countries, and these models accounted for between 30% and 62% of variance. Social support and a sense of financial

freedom were particularly useful in predicting life satisfaction. Coping resources accounted for 54% of variance in perceived stress. There were significant sex differences for both countries, generally favoring males, in regard to specific coping resources. Kousha and Mohseni (2000) investigated (1) how satisfied and happy Iranians are, (2) what factors determine their happiness, and (3) whether those factors are the same as, those that determine their happiness among Americans. It was found that at the macro level, Iranians are not a very happy people. Furthermore, the level of their happiness reflects the social of economic statues of most developing societies. Demographic variables did not have much effect on one's happiness are the same in both societies, however, the degree of their importance where is significantly. Sam (2001) examined self reported satisfaction with life. The students reported on the whole good satisfaction with life. However students from Europe and North America were on the whole more satisfied than their peers from Africa and Asia. It was also found that factors such as the number of friends, satisfaction with finances, perceived discrimination and information received prior to the foreign, sojourn significantly affected the student's life Expectation. Tamini and Mohammadyfar (2009) compared the mental health and life satisfaction of Irani and Indian students and results illustrated that Indian students were significantly more satisfied than their Iranian counterparts. Farooqi and Tamini (2010) demonstrated that female students significantly obtained higher mean scores than male students on life satisfaction scale.

The results of different studies revealed that coping stress strategies have effect on life Expectation. Therefore, the present study aims to find out the relationship between life satisfaction and stress coping strategies and also compare the life satisfaction of Science and Art faculty's students of Universities in Kerala . Furthermore the present study attempts to provide answers for following questions:

1. Is there any significant correlation between life Expectation and types of stress coping strategies in science and art students?
2. What is regression equation of stress coping strategies on life Expectation?
3. Is there any significant difference between the mean scores of science and art faculty's students on life Expectation scale?
4. Is there any significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students on life Expectation scale?

METHOD:

Sample

To select the adequate sample for the present study 205 students from science faculty (54 male and 49 female) and art faculty (49 male and 53 female) were selected at random.

TOOLS:

Stress Coping Strategies: This inventory developed by Endler & Parker (1990a). This inventory (48 items, using 5-point Likert scales) measures three main coping strategies: task focused, dealing with the problem at hand; emotion focused, concentrating on the resultant emotions (e.g., becoming angry or

upset); and avoidance coping, trying to avoid the problem. There are 16 items under each coping strategy. Avoidance coping can be divided further into two types: an 8-item Distraction subscale; and a 5-item Social Diversion subscale. This inventory had very good Cronbach's alpha values, 0.91, 0.89 and 0.85 respectively for Task, Emotional and Avoidance-oriented. The overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.91.

Life Expectation Scale:

This scale was developed by Huebner (1994) in order to identify students' life Expectation. Internal consistency (alpha) coefficients have been reported in various publications (Greenspoon & Saklofske, 1997; Huebner, 1994; Huebner, Laughlin, Ash, and Gilman, 1998). The findings suggest that the reliabilities all range from .70s to low .90s; thus they are acceptable for research purposes. Test-retest coefficients for two- and four-week time periods have also been reported (Huebner, 1997) falling mostly in the .70 to .90 range, providing further support for the reliability of the scale. Tamini and Mohammadyfar (2009) showed that overall Cronbach's Alpha was 0.7577.

RESULTS:

To respond to the first question of research Pearson correlation coefficient was applied and results are given in table-1.

Table-1 Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Stress Coping Strategies and Life Expectation of Students (n=205)

Variable	Life Expectation	Task focused	Emotion focused	Avoidance coping
Life Expectation	1			
Task focused	.227**	1		
Emotion focused	.129	.552**	1	
Avoidance coping	.306**	.536**	.552**	1

**p<0.01

The results of table-1 show that a significant positive correlation was found between life Expectation and task focused ($r=.227$, $p<0.01$), and also life Expectation had significant correlation with avoidance coping ($r=.306$, $p<0.01$), but life Expectation had not any significant correlation with emotion focused.

For responding to the second question of research stepwise regression was used and results are shown in table-2.

Table- 2 Stepwise Regression on Life Expectation

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	R	R2
Avoidance Coping	.167	.036	.306***	4.583	.306	.094

***p<0.001

As shown in table-2, avoidance coping (Beta=.306, p<0.001) was related with students life Expectation. Other dimensions of stress coping strategies (task focused and emotion focused) failed enter into the regression equation, which shows that they were not significantly associated with life Expectation. Avoidance coping accounted for 9.4% variance in life Expectation of students. For responding to the third and fourth question of research independent t test was used and results are given in table-3 and table-4.

Table-3 Showing the SD, Mean and T Value of Two Faculty's Students on Life Satisfaction (n=205)

Faculty	S.D	Mean	t value
Science students	4.04644	23.8058	0.099
Art students	4.65382	24.8137	

The results of table-3 illustrate that there was not any statistically significant difference between two faculty's students on life Expectation (p>0.05).

Table- 4 Showing the SD, Mean and T Value of Male and Female Students on Life Expectation (n=205)

Gender	S.D	Mean	t value
Male students	4.68396	23.1068	-4.095***
Female students	3.68763	25.5196	

***P<0.001

As it is observed from Table-4 that Female students scored higher on life Expectation scale (M=25.5196) as compared to Male students (M=23.1068), both groups are statistically different on life Expectation scale (t=-4.095, p<0.001), indicating that Female students was most satisfied with their life than Male students.

CONCLUSION

The results of Pearson coefficient correlation indicated that life Expectation significantly correlated with task focused ($r=.227$, $p<0.01$), and also life Expectation had significant correlation with avoidance coping ($r=.306$, $p<0.01$), but life satisfaction had not any significant correlation with emotion focused. The results of the present study are in conformity with the research of Dubey and Agarwal (2007) and Matheny et al. (2004). The stress coping strategies increase life Expectation and if students apply effective coping strategies for stress their life Expectation would increase vice versa if stress coping strategies be weak student's life would be vulnerable and might they experience some neurotic and mentally disorders.

The results of stepwise regression illustrated that avoidance coping ($p<0.001$) was related with students life Expectation. Other dimensions of stress coping strategies (task focused and emotion focused) failed enter into the regression equation, which shows that they were not significantly associated with life Expectation. Avoidance coping accounted for 9.4% variance in life Expectation of students. The results of this study are in conformity with the research of Dubey and Agarwal (2007). Avoidance coping is a predictor for student's life Expectation while task focused and emotion focused are not. In a indigenous culture like Kerala, it is emphasized to be used from avoidance coping and so they do not prefer to take risk for solving problems, thus, their Expectation with life derives from this type of stress coping.

The results of the present study illustrated that there was not any significant difference between science and art faculties on life Expectation. It does not seem that educational course to be an important variable for Expectation with life.

The results indicated that life Expectation scores of female students were higher than male students and they were more satisfied with their life than female students. Similar findings were reported by Sam (2001); Farooqi and Tamini (2010). The majority of studies find no gender differences in life Expectation. These incongruity findings can be resolved by regarding the amount of emotions that males and females typically experience it. Women illustrate emotions of positive and negative with more severity than men; because of women are more emotionally while men are rationally. Women to be assumed that facing with higher level of happiness, experiencing much distress and tensions, but men are not facing with these problems, and moreover society has some different expectations from male and female, it seems that female should be passive and have less responsibilities than male and also male should be stronger, steady and cope with stress and disasters through thinking and effective recourses while female facing with problems tend to catharsizes their emotions like laughing and crying. it seems that female students are happier with their life than male students and also their responsibilities for future life is lessen than male, but in other hand male students should cope with some challenges for future life, they should prepare themselves for future life.

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