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GENDER AS A PREDICTOR OF STRESS COPING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

The objective of present empirical piece of research work is to examine the predicting effect of gender on stress coping strategies. Following the stratified random sampling technique 360 college going students within the age range of 18 to 21 years were drawn from different college of, Durg districts, to serve as participants in the present research work. In present research work correlational research design was employed. Stress coping strategies were measured by coping resistance scale (Shrivastva, 2001). Regression analysis was used to examine the predicting effect of gender on stress coping strategies. Results of study indicated that, gender was significant predictor of stress coping strategies. It is concluded that there is sufficient empirical and statistical evidence of the predication effect of gender on stress coping strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a hallmark period of transition between childhood and adulthood. It is characterized by significant changes in brain, hormones, physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development (Evans and Seligman, 2005). Dahl (2004) has defined adolescence as beginning with the onset of puberty and ending with the achievement of adult roles and responsibilities. The age span of 10 to 24 years is often used as a working definition, and it is further developed into three sub-stages, including early adolescence, middle adolescence, and late adolescence (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, AACAP, 2000). A number of dramatic and unique changes occur during adolescence. These changes contribute to increased risk of depression during this developmental period (Compas *et al.*, 1993). During adolescence, puberty usually begins at about ages 10 to 12 in girls and 12 to 14 in boys (Hofman and Greydanus, 1997). For most adolescents, puberty involves breast budding and menstruation in girls and growth in testicles and penis, wet dreams, and deepening of voice in boys (AACAP, 2000). Adolescents who are unprepared for these physical changes may have difficulties. They may feel awkward about their self and body and worry about if they are normal (AACAP, 2000). Research findings suggest that early physically maturing girls and late maturing boys appear to be at increased risk for a number of problems including depression (Ge *et al.*, 2001; Graber, Lewinsohn *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore, as adolescents move from childhood to adolescence, they tend to have increased conflicts with their

parents due to the drive for independence. Previous studies show that escalating parent-adolescent conflict predicted increases in adolescent internalizing symptoms (Rueter *et al.*, 1999). At the same time, adolescents have increased time spent with peers, and peer relationships become especially important in their life. Peer difficulties, including perceived peer rejection, are significantly associated with self-reported depression in adolescents (e.g., Panak and Garber, 1992; Prinstein and Aikins, 2004). Finally, from childhood to adolescence, reports of major stressful life events also increase for both boys and girls (Ge *et al.*, 1994), and a clear empirical link exists between stress and depression in adolescents (e.g., Connor-Smith and Compas, 2002; Meadows *et al.*, 2006). Thus, it can be expected that stress including prevalence and severity, may increase during adolescence compared to childhood. Coping style plays an important role in mediating between a stressful experience and the psycho physiological reactions to that experience, but research into the relationship between gender and coping style has produced mixed results. Some researchers have found no consistent differences between men's and women's coping styles (Pritchard and Wilson, 2006; Hamilton and Fagot, 1988), while others have found that women use more emotion-focused coping strategies whereas men use more problem-focused strategies (Miller and Kirsch, 1987; Matud, 2004; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, and Gruen, 1986; Day & Livingstone, 2003). In general, problem-focused coping has been found to be more effective than emotion-focused coping, which is associated with psychological distress (Sigmon, Stanton, and Snyder, 1995). Coping strategies are known to influence an individual's experience of stress. For most students, managing

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stress during college can be extremely challenging. However, learning how to manage stress may help students cope with every day social and academic pressures, and thus have a better college experience. Effective time management strategies increase academic performance (Campbell and Svenson, 1992) and are frequently suggested by academic assistance personnel as aids to enhance achievement for college students. Although programs emphasize starting large tasks well before due dates, breaking down large tasks into small ones, and doing small tasks on a regular schedule, students regularly ignore these techniques and find themselves in great distress before exams (Brown, 1991).

Stress and coping literature identify an extensive range of coping strategies that young people adopt (de Anda *et al.*, 2000; Moskowitz, Stein and Lightfoot, 2013; Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006; Williams and McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999). Some examples of emotion-focused coping include relaxation, distraction, escape, helplessness and withdrawal (Caltabiano *et al.*, 2008; de Anda *et al.*, 2000; Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006). Examples of problem-focused coping include problem-solving and support-seeking (Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006). An individual's ability to handle stress is determined by the relationship between personal attributes such as cognitive, emotional and behavioural development (Delahajj *et al.*, 2011; Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006). The highly influential work of Lazarus (1966) as cited by Folkman, Tedlie and Moskowitz (2004), emphasised the role of cognitive interpretation in both stress perception and coping. Folkman *et al.* (2004) suggests that how an individual appraises a situation determines the level of stress experienced. Williams and McGillicuddy-De Lisi's (1999) study on stress also focuses on the role of cognitive development in appraisal and coping. Results indicated that due to having a wider coping repertoire, older adolescents utilised more adaptive strategies than those younger (Williams and McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999). This suggests that experience with stress prepares adolescents for certain problems, thus allowing the individual to cope adaptively (Williams and McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1999). It is important to note however that the data was gathered over a short time and from a sample of predominantly white, middle-class students. This allows little room for generalisation to the wider population, however effectively demonstrates the role of cognition in stress coping. Empirical studies on stress coping strategies and gender among college going students in Indian context has not yet been conducted. Thus, the understanding of the gender and nature of stress coping strategies among college going students remains significantly limited. To bridge the gap in the literature, the present study purports to examine the role of gender on stress coping strategies among college going students.

METHODS

Participants

College going students are target population in the present research. Participants from urban, semi-urban and rural are included in this study. However, participants from only Durg Districts, Chhattisgarh state are included. 360 college going students (180 boys and 180 girls) with the chronological age range of 18-21 are included by the stratified random sampling technique.

Measures

Coping Resistance Scale (Shrivastva, 2001)

In this present research coping strategies were measured by coping resistance scale (Shrivastva, 2012). Scale consist five sub scales viz. approach- behavior, approach- cognitive, approach- cognitive behavior, avoidance- behavior, avoidance- cognitive. It has minimum 0 and maximum 200 score. A higher score indicates higher coping ability. Shrivastva, (2012) reported that satisfactory internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validity.

Procedure

Prior to initiation of the study, all participants gave their informed and written consent. The study obtained approval from research degree committee of home science, Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur, India. Introductory interview with the participants was made at different institution at durg district, Chhattisgarh state. They were aware about the objective of the research. Introductory interview, each participant was also illustrated the temperament of the research and the participants were illustrated about the privacy regarding acquaintance collected from them. They were urged to complete the questionnaire as per the instructions and after completion they returned the test and were acknowledged for their collaboration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All 360 cases were included for data calculation. Regression models were used to examine the predicting effect of predictor on criterion. SPSS version 22.0 was used for prediction analyses.

Approach- cognitive- Table-1 indicated that, gender explained 57.90% of the total variance ($R^2 = .579.00$; $F(1, 389) = 533.94$; $p < 0.01$). Gender of the participants (1= male, 2= female) was negatively associated with cognitive approach ($-.761$, $p < 0.01$). This shows that female participants were reported less cognitive approach.

Approach- behavior- Table-1 indicated that, gender explained 31.90% of the total variance ($R^2 = .319$; $F(1, 389) = 107.89$; $p < 0.01$). Gender of the participants (1= male, 2= female) was negatively associated with behavioral approach ($-.564$, $p < 0.01$). This shows that female participants were reported less behavioral approach.

Approach- cognitive behavior- Table-1 indicated that, gender explained 21.70% of the total variance ($R^2 = .217.00$; $F(1, 389) = 48.73$; $p < 0.01$). Gender of the participants (1= male, 2= female) was negatively associated with behavioral approach ($-.466$, $p < 0.01$). This shows that female participants were reported less cognitive behavioral approach.

Avoidance- behavior- Table-1 indicated that, gender explained 35.30% of the total variance ($R^2 = .353.00$; $F(1, 389) = 212.26$; $p < 0.01$). Gender of the participants (1= male, 2= female) was positively associated with behavioral avoidance ($.594$, $p < 0.05$). This shows that male participants were reported less behavioral avoidance.

Table 1. Regression models for the predicting effect of gender on stress coping strategies

Approach- cognitive			
Predicator	B	Std. Error	β
Gender (1= male, 2= female)	-16.424	.711	-.761**
R ²			.579**
F (1, 389)			533.94**

Approach- behavior			
Predicator	B	Std. Error	β
Gender (1= male, 2= female)	-4.544	.337	-.564**
R ²			.319**
F (1, 389)			181.91**

Approach- cognitive behavior			
Predicator	B	Std. Error	β
Gender (1= male, 2= female)	-5.485	.528	-.466**
R ²			.217**
F (1, 389)			107.89**

Avoidance- behavior			
Predicator	B	Std. Error	β
Gender (1= male, 2= female)	10.126	.695	.594**
R ²			.353**
F (1, 389)			212.26**

Avoidance- cognitive			
Predicator	B	Std. Error	β
Gender (1= male, 2= female)	10.484	.477	.744**
R ²			.554**
F (1, 389)			482.45**

**p <0.01, *p<0.05

Avoidance- cognitive- Table- 1 indicated that, all predictors explained 55.40% of the total variance ($R^2 = .55400$; $F_{(1,389)} = 482.45$; $p < 0.01$). Gender of the participants (1= male, 2= female) was positively associated with behavioral avoidance (.744, $p < 0.01$). This shows that male participants were reported less cognitive avoidance.

Conclusion

Present study concluded that there is sufficient empirical and statistical evidence of the predication effect of gender on stress coping strategies. Moreover, present research demonstrates thorough understanding of stress coping strategies among college going students.

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