

Proactive Stress Coping Strategies among Higher Secondary School Students

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Abstract: *The study was meant to identify various stress coping strategies adopted by higher secondary school students. Stress affects not only our physical health but our mental wellbeing too. The best way to manage stress is to prevent it. This may not be always possible. So, the next best thing is to reduce stress and make life easier. It is interesting to note that, stress has two faces. It is a good servant, but a bad master. In other words, it can be one's best friend or worst enemy. The study was conducted among 100 higher secondary school students. Findings of the study revealed that Cognitive restructuring (80%) was the pro-active goal-oriented strategy and Aggression (90%) was the pro-active emotion focused strategy adopted by majority of students.*

Keywords: Stress, coping strategies, goal oriented coping strategies, emotion focused coping strategies etc

1. Introduction

The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Selye in 1956. It was derived from the Latin word 'stringere'; which meant the experience of physical hardship, starvation, torture and pain. Selye, 1936 defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it". Further, stress was defined as "any external event or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium" (Selye, 1956). Stress affects not only our physical health but our mental wellbeing too. The best way to manage stress is to prevent it. This may not be always possible. So, the next best thing is to reduce stress and make life easier. It is interesting to note that, stress has two faces. It is a good servant, but a bad master. In other words, it can be one's best friend or worst enemy. A certain amount of stress is necessary to achieve success (eustress), but undue stress causes distress. Stress is received by different people differently. If two people experience the same amount of stress or pressure, one may take it as positive or healthy and the other may accept it as negative.

'Coping' is the means through which a person handles his/her stress in life. How the individual deals with stressful situations is known as coping. Coping refers to a person's active efforts to resolve stress and create new ways of handling new situations at each life stage (Erikson, 1959). The goals of coping include the desire to maintain a sense of personal integrity and to achieve greater personal control over the environment. Then the person modifies some aspects of the situation or the self in order to achieve a more adequate person-environment fit. Coping thus, is the behaviour that occurs after the person had a chance to analyze the situation, take a reading of his or her emotions and to move to a closer or more distant position from the challenge.

Pro-active coping strategies

Proactive coping is defined as efforts to strive actively to seek new challenges, create new opportunities, and facilitate promotion toward challenging goals so that they will be less negative. Proactive coping strategy is a coping strategy that is multidimensional and forward-looking. Proactive coping integrates processes of personal quality of life management

with those of self-regulatory goal attainment. It consists of efforts to build up general resources that facilitate promotion of challenging goals and personal growth. Among the different strategies of proactive coping, investigator use only two strategies namely proactive goal-oriented and proactive emotion focused stress coping strategies. (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

Proactive goal-oriented coping strategies are the strategies for actively preventing the problems before they develop and the active solution of problems/stressors which already confront the individual. The proactive goal-oriented individual in this stage initiates action, takes responsibility for his or her actions while at the same time overcomes obstacles.

Proactive emotion-focused stress coping strategies are the strategies used to handle feelings of distress, rather than the actual problem. Emotion-focused coping involves trying to reduce the negative emotional responses associated with stress such as embarrassment, fear, anxiety, depression, excitement and frustration. It is emotional coping in that its goal is that of emotion-regulation, to promote a feeling of well-being and tranquility by easing anxiety, stress and impatience through active mental focusing and physical activity.

Objective of the Study

To identify the stress coping strategies among higher secondary school students.

2. Methodology

In order to identify the stress coping strategies adopted by higher secondary school students the investigator collected data by administering a tool 'Stress Coping Strategy Identification Inventory for Students' on 100 higher secondary school students. The tool consisted of 32 dimensions classified under two major headings namely 'Goal Oriented Coping Strategies' and 'Emotion Focused Coping Strategies'. Each of these headings had 16 dimensions classified under them. The students were asked to identify the strategies adopted by them in the learning situations.

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Population and sample

Population consisted of all the male and female higher secondary school students studying in govt, aided and unaided schools of Kerala. Sample consisted of 100 higher secondary school students.

Tool used

The tool used for the study is ‘Stress coping strategy identification inventory’ for higher secondary school students.

Statistical technique used

Percentage analysis was done to find out the number of students who have adopted different stress coping strategies in their learning environment.

3. Analysis and Interpretation

Identification of stress coping strategies among higher secondary school students was done through percentage analysis. Various dimensions, number of students adopted each strategy and percentage of students is given in table 1.

Table 1: Number and percentage of students who adopted each coping strategies

Goal Oriented Coping Strategies			
S. no	Dimension	No. of students	Percentage
1	Active coping	58	58
2	Planning	60	60
3	Individual responsibility	31	31
4	Restraint coping	51	51
5	Persistence	25	25
6	Positive reinterpretation & growth	56	56
7	Direct action	45	45
8	Preventive coping	25	25
9	Proactive planning	20	20
10	Self-belief to face challenges	44	44
11	Cognitive restructuring	80	80
12	Priority setting	69	69
13	Suppression of competing activities	67	67
14	Problem solving	56	56
15	Denial	76	76
16	Helplessness	59	59

Emotion Focused Coping Strategies

1	Acceptance	56	56
2	Mental disengagement	65	65
3	Focus on & venting of emotions	75	75
4	Behavioural disengagement	65	65
5	Seeking social support for emotional reasons	52	52
6	Emotional self-regulation	46	46
7	Wishful thinking	67	67
8	Accommodation	77	77
9	Readiness to take others suggestions	44	44
10	Tendency to rely on others	48	48
11	Social withdrawal	56	56
12	Turning to religion	50	50
13	Delegation	58	58
14	Submission	86	86
15	Projection	89	89
16	Aggression	90	90

The students, even though were not aware that these are coping strategies, have adopted them in their daily learning environment. Cognitive restructuring (80%) was the pro-active goal-oriented strategy and Aggression (90%) was the pro-active emotion focused strategy adopted by majority of students. But it was found that following strategies were adopted by less than 50 percentages of the students (Table 2).

Table 2: Number and Percentage of Students Who Adopted Proactive Stress Coping Strategies

S. No	Dimensions	Number	Percentage
Goal Oriented Coping Strategies			
1	Individual responsibility	31	9.3
2	Persistence	22	6.6
3	Direct action	41	13.5
4	Preventive coping	19	5.7
5	Pro-active planning	18	5.4
6	Self-belief to face challenges	42	12.6

Emotion Focused Coping Strategies

1	Emotional self-regulation	44	13.2
2	Readiness to take others suggestions	41	12.3
3	Tendency to rely on others	42	12.6

4. Findings of the Study

Cognitive restructuring (80%) was the pro-active goal-oriented strategy and Aggression (90%) was the pro-active emotion focused strategy adopted by majority of students. But it is found that Individual responsibility, Persistence, Direct action, preventive coping, Proactive planning, Self-belief to face challenges in the goal-oriented strategies and Emotional self-regulation, readiness to take others suggestions and Tendency to rely on others in the Emotional coping strategies were adopted only by less than 50% of the students.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed that higher secondary school students adopt various stress coping strategies in their learning environments even though they are not aware that these are coping strategies. Cognitive structuring and aggression were the strategies adopted by majority of students. But some strategies were adopted by less than 50% of students. But they are also significant. So necessary steps can be taken by school authorities and curriculum planners to develop these strategies also.

References

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