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ADOLESCENTS' ACADEMIC STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES IN RELATION TO THEIR PERSONALITY

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ABSTRACT

In India over 190 million of Adolescence was living it is nearly 20% of the total population. Adolescence stage is one of the most important age of life in all the societies of the world, may it be ancient or modern. Adolescence is a period which begins with teenage years and ends with the general recession of growth. Likewise, adolescence is a stage between childhood and adulthood when the individual is deal with a series of developmental challenges, for example, attaining growing independence from the family or fulfilling new social roles with peers. The experience of adolescents during teen years would differ significantly according to the cultural and social values of the network of social identities they grow in. In fact this is the age, which has stimulated up a massive amount of anxiety in the minds of parents, and rightly has it also put a great stress on the adolescents themselves. This study was done with the sample size of 400 students from eight different schools in Coimbatore district to analyze the academic stress and coping strategies of adolescents in relation to their personality. Sample was selected on the basis of simple random sampling method. Questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample respondents. Correlation and t-test was used to analyze the data.

KEYWORDS: *adolescents, industrial rebellion, Coping, Stress*

INTRODUCTION

In the life rotation of a homosapien mortal, puberty is a period of shift from childhood to adulthood. It is characterized by rapid physical, biological and hormonal changes resulting in to psychosocial, behavioural and sexual maturation between the ages of 10-19 years in a human being. Adolescence is often described as a period of life that begins in biology and ends in society. It means that physical and biological changes are universal and take place due to maturation but the psychosocial and

behavioural expressions are determined by the meaning given to these changes within a cultural system. The experience of adolescents during teen years would differ noticeably according to the cultural and social values of the network of social identities they grow in. This is a period which begins with teenage years and ends with the general recession of growth. Puberty is a psychological process, which is seen in all the societies. This is a period of 'puberty growth spurt' as regards physical development is concerned. Puberty is not a universal

notion. Adolescence is not a colossal universal experience. It varies in different societies. Adolescence, as a transition between childhood and adulthood, is an invention of industrial rebellion. Adolescence in traditional societies was different than in a post-industrial society.

Academic stress: Academic stress refers to the distasteful psychological situations that occur due to the educational expectations from parents, teachers, peers and family members, pressure of parents for academic achievements, present educational and examination system, burden of home work, coaching etc.

Coping Strategy: Any effort or strategy made by an individual to eliminate or master the stressful situation so that his physical and psychological survival is ensured is called coping strategy.

Adolescents: It is the age of development and adjustment during the transitional period between childhood and adulthood. This period emerges from childhood and merges into adulthood. The students of 11th and 12th grade are taken as sample for this study.

Personality: Hall & Lindzey (1991) state that personality may be defined in terms of attributes or qualities, that are highly typical of an individual and is an important part of the overall impression created on others.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Connor-Smith, J. K., et al (2000)ⁱ inspects responses to stress in adolescence: measurement of coping and involuntary stress responses. The development of a measure of coping and involuntary stress responses in adolescence is described. The Responses to Stress Questionnaire (RSQ) reflects a conceptual model that includes volitional coping efforts and involuntary responses to specific stressful events or specified domains of stress. The psychometric characteristics of the RSQ were examined across 4 domains of stress in 3 samples of adolescents and parent reports obtained in 2 samples. The factor structure of the RSQ was tested and replicated with an adequate degree of fit using confirmatory factor analysis across 3 stressors in 2 samples. Internal consistency and retest reliability for the 5 factors were adequate to excellent. Concurrent validity was established through correlations with another measure of coping, heart rate reactivity, and correlations of self- and parent-reports. Significant correlations with both adolescents' and parents' reports of internalizing and externalizing symptoms were consistent with hypotheses.

Bettina Piko (2001)ⁱⁱ conducted a study namely, “ Gender Differences And similarities In Adolescents' Ways of Coping” . The study was focused on the interrelationships between the ways of coping and some health-related variables in adolescence. Data were collected among secondary school students (n = 1039) in Szeged, Hungary: Factor analysis of the shortened and adapted version of the Ways of Coping Questionnaire gave a four-factor solution: passive coping, problem-analyzing coping, risky coping, and support-seeking coping. Passive and support-seeking ways of coping were more common among girls, however, this latter way of coping proved to be a more significant correlate of psychosocial health among boys. Both among boys and girls, passive and risky coping factors played a negative role, and problem-analyzing and support seeking coping factors played a positive role in psychosocial health. Findings suggested that maladaptive coping and psychosocial health problems might form a vicious circle in which risk-taking as a way of coping might play a central role in adolescence.

Elgar, Arlett and Groves (2003)ⁱⁱⁱ conducted a study namely, “ Stress, coping, and behavioural problems among rural and urban adolescents ”. They studied the differences between rural and urban adolescents and gender differences related to stress levels, coping strategies and behavioral problems. Four major results were found. First, they found no differences between rural and urban adolescents in terms of stress levels and behavioral problems, but urban adolescent boys reported more conflictual problems than did girls and urban boys reported having more external problems than did rural boys and girls. Second, rural adolescents were more affected by higher unemployment, poverty and emigration but did not differ significantly from urban adolescents in terms of stress levels or coping strategies. Third, even though conflict levels and behavior problems seemed to be similar between rural and urban adolescents, rural adolescents seemed to have a closer relationship between these two variables as well as between conflict and coping strategy in this same group. Fourth, the approach strategy did not act as a moderator in the relationship between stress and behavioral problems.

Hampel and Peterman (2005)^{iv} examined adolescents' coping strategies. Emotionally focused coping strategies varied with development. Internal control augmented whereas distraction/recreation diminished. Problem focussed coping strategies remained stable whereas maladaptive strategies were divided between those that increased (resignation, rumination, aggression) and those that did not change (passive avoidance). Generally speaking, there is a

lack of coping strategies at the beginning and middle of adolescence. The authors emphasized that the beginning of adolescence is a time of increased normative stress. It is therefore important to have specific preventive programs according to gender; female adolescents need to acquire coping strategies such as distraction or positive self talk and adolescent males need to develop more pro-social behaviour.

Connor-Smith, Jennifer & Flachsbart Celeste (2007)^v studied on relations between personality and coping: a meta-analysis. The study of this meta-analysis has implications for understanding the joint role of personality and coping in determining vulnerability to distress. Coping-mediated models assume that the link between personality and distress can be explained by the selection of ineffective coping strategies; by comparison, coping moderated models suggest that personality and coping interact, with coping effectiveness dependent on personality traits. Because direct effects of personality on coping are typically small, coping is unlikely to fully mediate relations between personality and distress. However, tests of coping moderation have indicated that strategies that are effective for some individuals are useless, or even harmful, to others. In particular, daily report and laboratory studies suggest that individuals high in sensitivity to threat may either benefit from disengagement or be harmed by engagement in the short term, with the opposite pattern appearing for individuals low in threat sensitivity. Further investigation of the ways personality and coping interact to predict distress is important to understanding the development of coping. Personality may influence coping both by shaping the strategies that are easiest for an individual child to implement and by influencing the success of those strategies. Greater insight into the interplay of personality and coping will aid in the design of more effective intervention and prevention programs by making it possible to tailor programs to fit the unique needs of individuals.

Carver S., Charles & Connor-Smith, Jennifer (2010)^{vi} studied on, “ Personality and Coping. In the study following points have been summarized: a) Biological (temperament) and goal based views of human nature specify basic processes that underlie coping, b) A fundamental distinction is between engagement coping and disengagement coping, c) Trait optimism predicts engagement coping (positively) and disengagement coping (inversely), d) The five-factor traits of extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness relate to more engagement coping; neuroticism to more disengagement coping; and conscientiousness and agreeableness to less disengagement coping, e)

Relations between traits and coping are often moderated by other variables (age, severity of stressor, and the time between coping and report of coping), f) Future research must test for greater complexity in associations (e.g., interactions) among personality traits, coping, and outcomes.

Savita and Baida (2012)^{vii} conducted a study namely, “ Personality Assessment of Rural and Urban Adolescent Boys from Disorganized Families ”. The present investigation was an attempt to study personalities of rural and urban adolescents from disorganized families. The study was conducted in purposively selected Hisar district of Haryana state. Lists of students of disorganized families, within the age group of 13-18 years were prepared and 45 rural and 45 urban respondents were selected randomly. Multidimensional Assessment of Personality Series (MAP Series Form-T) for Teens was used to assess the personality. Results showed that rural adolescents were significantly higher in their boldness, leadership, sensitivity and social warmth. Significant results were also found in the level of general ability, guilt proneness, mental health, self - sufficiency and tension.

Dhull, Indira and Jathol Pargat S. (2013)^{viii} conducted a study on, “ Coping Strategies of Different Personality Types of Adolescents ”. This study mainly focused on finding out the difference between coping strategies of different personality types of adolescents. A sample of 100 students aged between 13 and 17 years was drawn from private senior secondary schools of Faridabad. ‘Ways of Coping ’ Questionnaire by Folkman & Lazarus and Catell ’ s 16 PF Personality Test was used to collect the data. Results indicate that different dimensions of personality types namely extroversion-introversion, low anxiety- high anxiety, tough poise-tender minded and independence and subduedness does not differ significantly when it comes to adopting the various types of coping strategies.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the association of academic stress with personality of adolescents.
2. To find out the association of coping strategies with personality of adolescents.

HYPOTHESIS OF STUDY

1. No association exists between academic stress and personality traits.
2. No association exists between coping strategies and personality traits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A sample of 400 adolescents studying in 11th and 12th classes was selected from eight different higher secondary schools in Coimbatore district of TamilNadu state. The sample was selected using simple random sampling method. Primary and Secondary data were used for study. The primary

data were collected through questionnaire and secondary data were collected from various journals, websites, published and unpublished reports and projects. Correlation and t-test were used as Statistical tools to analyze the collected data.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Table No. 1
Coefficients of Correlation between Academic Stress and Personality Traits of Adolescents

Personality Traits	Factors of Academic Stress					
	Cognitive	Affective	Physical	Social Interpersonal	Motivational	
Activity-Passivity	-0.129	-0.069	-0.079	-0.096	-0.097	
Enthusiastic-Non Enthusiastic	0.053	0.081	0.091	-0.103	0.011	
Assertive- Submissive	0.147	0.031	0.087	0.002	0.069	
Suspicious- Trusting	0.198*	0.147	0.217**	0.230**	0.301**	
Depressive-Non- Depressive	0.346**	0.323**	0.362**	0.295**	0.290**	
Emotional Instability- Emotional Stability	0.273**	0.275**	0.317**	0.240**	0.235**	
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)						
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)						

Source: Computed Data

A perusal of table 1 depicts that suspicious-trusting trait of personality is positively and significantly correlated with cognitive, physical, social/interpersonal and motivational factors of academic stress. Depressive-non-depressive and emotional instability-emotional stability traits of personality are also positively and significantly correlated with all the five factors of academic stress viz. cognitive, affective, physical, social/interpersonal and motivational. Thus null hypothesis that “ No relationship exists between academic stress and personality traits of adolescents in case of total sample ” , was rejected in terms of suspicious-trusting, depressive-non-depressive and emotional instability-emotional stability personality traits. On the other hand activity-passivity trait of personality

had negative and insignificant correlation with all the five factors of academic stress. There was positive but insignificant correlation between enthusiastic-non enthusiastic trait of personality and cognitive, affective, physical and motivational factors of academic stress. Assertive- submissive trait of personality had positive and insignificant correlation with all the five factors of academic stress viz. cognitive, affective, physical, social/interpersonal and motivational.

Thus null hypothesis that “No relationship exists between academic stress and personality traits of adolescents in case of total sample” , was retained in terms of activity-passivity, enthusiastic-non enthusiastic and assertive-submissive personality traits.

Table-2
Coefficients of Correlation between Coping Strategies and Personality Traits

Personality Traits	Dimensions of Coping Strategies							
	Confrontive	Distancing	Self Controlling	Seeking Social Support	Accepting Responsibility	Escape Avoidance	Planful Problem Solving	Positive Reappraisal
Activity-Passivity	-0.047	0.025	0.078	0.063	-0.073	-0.147	0.147	0.001
Enthusiastic-Non Enthusiastic	-0.001	-0.02	0.026	0.046	0.066	0.054	0.08	0.039
Assertive- Submissive	0.113	0.185*	-0.015	0.186*	-0.091	0.083	-0.004	-0.146
Suspicious- Trusting	0.048	-0.022	0.035	0.063	-0.017	0.146	-0.01	-0.092
Depressive-Non- Depressive	0.068	-0.096	0.047	0.067	-0.016	0.269**	0.039	0.015
Emotional Instability- Emotional Stability	0.021	-0.083	0.01	-0.105	-0.007	0.249**	-0.102	-0.116
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)								
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)								

Source: Computed Data

A glance table 2 depicts that assertive-submissive trait of personality is negatively and significantly correlated with distancing and is positively and significantly correlated with seeking social support dimension of coping strategies. Depressive-non- depressive and emotional instability-emotional stability traits of personality are also positively and significantly correlated with escape avoidance dimension of coping strategies. However insignificant correlation was found between assertive-submissive trait and confrontive, self-controlling, accepting responsibility, escape avoidance, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal dimensions of coping strategies. Depressive-non depressive and emotional

instability-emotional stability traits of personality had no significant correlation with all the dimensions of coping strategies except escape avoidance. Activity-passivity, enthusiastic-non enthusiastic and suspicious-trusting traits of personality were found to have insignificant correlation with all the dimensions of coping strategies.

Thus, null hypothesis that “ No relationship exists between coping strategies and personality traits of adolescents in case of total sample ”, was partially accepted.

Table -3
t-value between scores on Coping Strategies in respect of Adolescents with Personality Traits

Coping Strategies	Personality Traits					
	Activity-Passivity	Enthusiastic-Non Enthusiastic	Assertive-Submissive	Suspicious-Trusting	Depressive-Non-Depressive	Emotional Instability-Emotional Stability
Confrontive	0.152 NS	0.579 NS	0.303 NS	0.061 NS	0.870 NS	0.431 NS
Distancing	0.478 NS	0.404 NS	0.911 NS	0.872NS	0.650NS	1.16NS
Self Controlling	0.660NS	0.016NS	0.008 NS	0.224NS	0.458NS	0.350NS
Seeking SocialSupport	1.39NS	0.974 NS	1.59NS	0.386 NS	1.98*	0.469 NS
Accepting Responsibility	1.15 NS	0.244 NS	1.16 NS	0.293 NS	0.025 NS	0.017 NS
Escape Avoidance	2.32*	0.023 NS	0.007 NS	1.10 NS	2.70**	2.65**
Planful Problem Solving	2.32*	1.36 NS	0.002 NS	0.188 NS	0.753 NS	1.06 NS
Positive Reappraisal	0.242 NS	0.983 NS	1.39 NS	1.85 NS	0.193 NS	0.682 NS

Source: Computed Data

Activity-Passivity: obtained t-value of .152 in confrontive coping, .478 in distancing, .660 in self-controlling, 1.39 in seeking social support, 1.15 in accepting responsibility and .242 in positive reappraisal is lesser than the table value, even at 0.05. Therefore the null hypothesis that “ Adolescents having activity and passivity trait of personality do not differ significantly on different dimensions of coping strategies ” , is retained in terms of confrontive, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social-support, accepting

responsibility and positive reappraisal coping strategies. But the t-value of 2.32 in escape avoidance and 2.32 in planful problem solving is greater than the table value, at 0.05. Therefore the null hypothesis that “ Adolescents having activity and passivity trait of personality do not differ significantly on different dimensions of coping strategies ” is rejected in terms of escape avoidance and planful problem solving coping strategies.

Enthusiastic-Non Enthusiastic: obtained t-value of .579 in confrontive coping, .404 in distancing, .016 in self-controlling, .974 in seeking social support, .244 in accepting responsibility, .023 in escape avoidance, 1.36 in planful problem solving and .023 in positive reappraisal is lesser than the table value, even at 0.05. Therefore the null hypothesis that adolescents having enthusiastic and non-enthusiastic trait of personality do not differ significantly on different dimensions of coping strategies (confrontive, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social-support, accepting responsibility, escape avoidance, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal), is retained.

Assertive- Submissive: obtained t-value of .303 in confrontive coping, .911 in distancing, .008 in self-controlling, 1.59 in seeking social support, 1.16 in accepting responsibility, .007 in escape avoidance, .002 in planful problem solving and 1.39 in positive reappraisal is lesser than the table value, even at 0.05. Therefore the null hypothesis that adolescents having assertive and submissive trait of personality do not differ significantly on different dimensions of coping strategies (confrontive, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social-support, accepting responsibility, escape avoidance, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal), is retained.

Suspicious- Trusting: obtained t-value of .061 in confrontive coping, .872 in distancing, .224 in self-controlling, .386 in seeking social support, .293 in accepting responsibility, 1.10 in escape avoidance, .188 in planful problem solving and 1.85 in positive reappraisal is lesser than the table value, even at 0.05. Therefore the null hypothesis that adolescents having suspicious and trusting trait of personality do not differ significantly on different dimensions of coping strategies (confrontive, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social-support, accepting responsibility, escape avoidance, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal), is retained.

Depressive-Non- Depressive: obtained t-value of .870 in confrontive coping, .650 in distancing, .458 in self-controlling, .025 in accepting responsibility, .753 in planful problem solving and .193 in positive reappraisal is lesser than the table value, even at 0.05. Therefore the null hypothesis that “ Adolescents having depressive and non depressive trait of personality do not differ significantly on different dimensions of coping strategies ”, is retained in terms of confrontive, distancing, self-controlling, accepting responsibility, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal coping strategies. But the t-value of 1.98 in seeking social support and 2.70 in escape avoidance is greater than the table value, at 0.05. Therefore the null hypothesis that “ Adolescents having depressive and non depressive trait of

personality do not differ significantly on different dimensions of coping strategies ”, is rejected in terms of seeking social-support and escape avoidance coping strategies,. This might be due to the reason that depression drains one ’ s energy, hope and drive to do better.

Emotional Instability- Emotional Stability: obtained t-value of .431 in confrontive coping, 1.16 in distancing, .350 in self-controlling, .469 in seeking social support, .017 in accepting responsibility, 1.06 in planful problem solving and .682 in positive reappraisal is lesser than the table value, even at 0.05. Therefore the null hypothesis that “ Adolescents having emotional instability and emotional stability trait of personality do not differ significantly on different dimensions of coping strategies ”, is retained in terms of confrontive, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social-support, accepting responsibility, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal coping strategies. But the t-value of 2.65 in escape avoidance is greater than the table value, at 0.05. Therefore the null hypothesis that “ Adolescents having emotional instability and emotional stability trait of personality do not differ significantly on different dimensions of coping strategies ”, is rejected in terms of escape avoidance coping strategy.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Positive and significant correlation was found between suspicious-trusting trait of personality and all factors except affective factor of academic stress of adolescents.
2. Positive and significant correlation was found between depressive-non depressive and emotional instability-emotional stability traits of personality and all factors of academic stress of adolescents.
3. Adolescents with suspicious-trusting, depressive-non depressive & emotional instability-emotional stability traits of personality were found to have significant difference on their academic stress. Further mean scores revealed that adolescents having suspicious, depressive and emotional instability personality traits experience more academic stress than their respective counterparts.
4. Adolescents with active-passive trait of personality were found to have significant difference on escape avoidance coping strategy. Further mean score revealed that adolescents having passive personality trait use escape avoidance coping strategy more than their counterparts.
5. Adolescents with active-passive trait of personality were found to have significant difference on planful problem solving

coping strategy. Further mean score revealed that adolescents having active personality trait use planful problem solving coping strategy more than their counterparts.

6. Adolescents with depressive-non depressive trait of personality were found to have significant difference on seeking social support and escape avoidance coping strategies. Further mean scores revealed that adolescents having depressive personality trait use seeking social support and escape avoidance coping strategies more than their counterparts.
7. Adolescents with emotional instability-emotional stability trait of personality were found to have significant difference on escape avoidance coping strategy. Further mean scores revealed that adolescents having emotional instability trait use escape avoidance coping strategy more than their counterparts.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Suspicious trusting affecting the academic stress positively, so it is suggested that parent must maintain reasonable trust on adolescent students.
2. Based on the emotional stability of the student his depression was changing. So it is recommended that school and parents must give more stories to them and must spend enough time with them to understand about their expectations and problems to reduce their stress.

CONCLUSION

After the deep study on the academic stress of adolescents, it is concluded that the stress is not only because of the academic factors but it is highly

affected by the personal factors of the adolescents. The improvement in the personality of the students will increase their problem handling ability as well as good performance in their academic. Finally it is concluded that the personality improvement will lead to the improvement of the adolescent students' academic results.

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