

A Comparative Study of Coping Styles of Adolescents and The Middle-Aged

Dr. Hemlata Joshi

Assistant Professor

Department of Psychology

Jai Narain Vyas university, Jodhpur

Received Feb. 05, 2017

Accepted March 12, 2017

ABSTRACT: *Life throws challenges at an individual and how well he faces them and moves ahead is a result of his coping styles. Effective coping is important for health and adjustment and is learnt and improved upon lifelong. The present study is an attempt to explore the coping style across age, specifically, its difference across adolescents and the middle-aged. For this purpose, the Rosenzweig's Picture Frustration Study was administered to a sample of 100 adolescents and 100 middle-aged individuals from the city of Jodhpur. The Students' 't' test was applied to check the significance of difference across the two groups with regard to coping styles. The results revealed that the two groups differed significantly across all the six dimensions of imgression, introgression, extragression, ego-defence, obstacle-dominance and need-persistence.*

Keywords: *Coping styles, Adolescents, Middle-aged.*

Introduction

Coping strategies refer to the specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce or minimize stressful events. Two general coping strategies have been distinguished problem-solving strategies are efforts to do something active to alleviate stressful circumstances, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies involve efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events. Research indicates that people use both types of strategies to combat most stressful events (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). What kind of coping strategy one shall employ depends upon one's personal style, whether he copes actively or not and also upon the nature of the stressor. In case of problems that are potent to come under one's control people employ problem-focused coping strategies. On the other hand, in case of health and other similar challenging situations, people tend to adopt emotion-focused coping strategies.

An additional distinction that is often made in the coping literature is between active and avoidant coping strategies. Active coping strategies are either behavioral or psychological responses designed to change the nature of the stressor itself or how one thinks about it, whereas avoidant coping strategies lead people into activities (such as alcohol use) or mental states (such as withdrawal) that keep them from directly addressing stressful events. Generally speaking, active coping strategies, whether behavioral or emotional, are thought to be a psychological risk factor or marker for adverse responses to stressful life events (Holahan & Moos, 1987).

Broad distinctions, such as problem-solving versus emotion-focused, or active versus avoidant, have only limited utility for understanding coping, and so research on coping and its measurement has evolved to address the range of coping strategies. The problem of coping with stress and load situations belongs to the area of psychology, where meaning of life is seen as having a great positive role. In several theories, life meaning is considered an important source of positive coping and stress management. In Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence concept, which tries to find factors positively influencing coping abilities, meaningfulness holds the central position (Antonovsky, 1987). Wong (1993) in his resource-congruence model also considers personal meaning as major psychological resource contributing to resistance to stress. In accordance with these concepts. Zika and Chamberlain (1987) found in their research that the level of life meaningfulness negatively correlates with experienced level of daily stress. Similarly, Newcomb and Harlow (1986) found that adolescents with a lower sense of meaning reacted to stressful events on a larger scale by alcohol and drug abuse. These results suggest that meaning of life can be regarded as a

strong protective factor in maintaining health and coping ability. Firstly, meaning is considered as a multi-dimensional construct with several aspects (dimensions). Additionally, frustrating situations are emphasized as a partial aspect of stressful situations. coping strategies are also significant because they moderate the ways in which stressful events are experienced.

In Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence concept, which tries to find factors positively influencing coping abilities, meaningfulness holds the central position (Antonovsky, 1987). Wong (1993) in his resource-congruence model also considers personal meaning as major psychological resource contributing to resistance to stress. In accordance with these concepts, Zika and Chamberlain (1987) found in their research that the level of life meaningfulness negatively correlates with experienced level of daily stress. Similarly, Newcomb and Harlow (1986) found that adolescents with a lower sense of meaning reacted to stressful events on a larger scale by alcohol and drug abuse. These results suggest that meaning of life can be regarded as a strong protective factor in maintaining health and coping ability.

Methodology

Variables: Independent variable – Age, Dependent variable – Coping Styles

Design: The present study is a correlational study. A sample of 100 adolescents (13-18 years) and 100 middle-aged (40-45 years) was selected using incidental cum purposive sampling method from the city of Jodhpur.

Problem: Is there any significant difference in the levels of coping styles of adolescents and middle-aged?

Hypothesis: There shall be no significant difference in the levels of coping styles of adolescents and middle-aged.

Test employed: Rosenzweig's Picture Frustration Study. Rosenzweig's Picture Frustration Test was used to determine coping strategies. This projective approach is an alternative to self-reporting methods frequently employed, and can be helpful in reducing errors deriving from the subject's social desirability. The test comprises 24 situations with two persons, where one of them is blocked or accused by the other. The subject is asked to write the first reaction she/he presumes the frustrated person would say.

Results

Coping Strategy	Groups	Mean	S.D.	T
Imgression	13 to 18 years	13.55	4.45	3.88*
	40 to 45 years	11.29	3.76	
Introgression	13 to 18 years	2.55	1.78	4.42*
	40 to 45 years	3.75	2.05	
Extrgression	13 to 18 years	7.06	4.05	2.33*
	40 to 45 years	8.51	4.71	
Obstacle Dominance	13 to 18 years	9.29	4.24	3.00*
	40 to 45 years	7.73	3.01	
Ego Defence	13 to 18 years	0.67	0.82	6.51*
	40 to 45 years	1.89	1.69	
Need Persistence	13 to 18 years	11.25	4.03	2.70*
	40 to 45 years	9.80	3.54	

Discussion

The objective of the present study was to compare the coping styles of adolescents and middle-aged group. The results indicated that middle-aged group scored higher on introgression, as well as on extrgression. This finding is contradictory because on one side they are showing the tendency to evade aggression and on the other side, they are turning aggression upon themselves. In the case of ego-defence again, middle-aged group scored higher. A person who turns aggression on himself generally will not be ego-dominated. This

contradiction needs further exploration on a larger sample. The adolescents scored high on imgression, obstacle-dominance and need-persistence. Thus, the null hypothesis cannot be accepted.

Summary

The objective of the present study was to compare the coping strategies of adolescents and the middle-aged, with respect to the six categories as measured by the Rosenzweig's picture frustration study. The results showed that the two groups differed significantly across all the six categories of coping styles.

References

1. Folkman, & Lazarus, R.S., Dunkel-Schetter, C., DeLongis, A., & Gruen, R.J. (1986). Dynamics of a stressful encounter, Cognitive appraisal, coping, and encounter outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 992–1003.
2. Goodkin, K., Blaney, N.T., Feaster, D., Fletcher, M.A., Baum, M.K., Mantero-Atienza, E., Klimas, N.G., Millon, C., Szapocznik, J. & Elsdorfer, C. (1992). Active coping style is associated with natural killer cell cytotoxicity in asymptomatic HIV-1 seropositive homosexual men, *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 36, 635–650.
3. Goodkin, K., Fuchs, I., Feaster, D., Leeka, M.a & Rishel, D.D. (1992). Life stressors and coping style are associated with immune measures in HIV-1 infection – a preliminary report. *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine*, 22, 155–172.
4. Newcomb, M.d., Harlow, L.L. (1986), Life events and substance use among adolescents : Mediating effects of perceived loss of control and meaninglessness in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 564–577.
5. Segerstrom, S.C., Taylor, S.E., Kemeny, M.E., & Faey, J.L. (in press). Effects of optimism and coping on stressor-related mood and immune changes, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.