



A STUDY ON ACADEMIC STRESS COPING STRATEGIES OF INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS IN CHITTOOR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carry out with an objective of identifying the academic stress coping strategies used by intermediate students and the level of usage of stress coping strategies. Data was collected through the Academic Stress Coping Strategies Rating Scale from 651 second year intermediate students studying in Intermediate junior colleges of Chittoor district, selected by using simple random sampling technique. The study reveals that only 13- 15 percent of students are using stress coping strategies at low level and 16- 21% of students are using stress coping strategies at high level. Further, the authors suggest appropriate interventions to make the students aware of using different coping strategies to overcome their academic stress.

Introduction

In today's education systems starting from elementary to university level, in every stage students are faced with several challenges. Students life is subjected to different kinds of stressors such as; the health related, home and college environmental related, students-teacher-peer related, academic related stressors and examination related stressors. Stress occurs when pressure exceeds beyond its perceived ability to cope. Coping strategies are known to influence an individual's experiences of stress. For most students, managing stress during college can be extremely challenging so that may students committing suicides,

experiencing many psychological, physical problems and low achievement/failures in examination etc.

The print media (Eenadu, 10th Sep 2015) and National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB-2014) reveals that many students are committing suicides for simple reasons like failure in examination; 11% of them suffer from anxiety for various causes like adjustment to new environment; 39% of them suffer from academic stress; 27% of them experience stress due to love affairs while another 21% of them are under stress due to problems in the family. As per National Crime Records Bureau and the Surveys (2013) of many independent institutions, 3267 students committed suicides in the last 10 years in Andhra Pradesh alone. It is more among intermediate students.

Coping refers to ‘How mind reacts to stress’ (Lazarus, 1966). Coping is the combination of cognitive, behavioral, psychodynamic and physiological responses to resolve the problems and to remove the tension (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980). When people are exposed to a stressful demand, they respond by coping. Coping attempts either to reduce the demand, to reduce its effect, or to help one change the way one thinks about the demand. Coping is “an effortful process of adaptation to challenging, threatening or harmful circumstances”. Problem – focused coping, Emotion- focused coping and Avoidance coping are of three types (Billings and Moose, 1981). Problem focused coping consists of activities aimed at changing the situation and thereby resulting stress. Emotion – focused coping consists of thoughts and activities aimed at managing one’s own internal reactions and feelings. Avoidance coping includes behavioral disengagement, mental disengagements, alcohol, drug disengagement and use of humour.

Coping often reduces the negative effects of the stressors, but sometimes coping creates new and different problems. A coping style can be effective at one age but may be totally unsuitable at another age. In the similar way, a particular coping style may be totally appropriate in one situation while it is inappropriate in another. It is mandatory to understand that how coping ways adopted by students differ from other students who experience the significant stress; their perception of handling the psycho-social problems effectively might help in the planning of intervention services.

Title of the Study

A Study on Academic Stress Coping Strategies of Intermediate Students in Chittoor District

Objectives of the Study

1. To develop a tool to identify the academic stress coping strategies of second year intermediate students in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.
2. To find out the sources and level of usage of academic stress coping strategies among intermediate students.

Assumptions of the Study

1. It is possible to develop a research tool to assess the level of academic stress coping strategies of second year intermediate students.
2. The academic stress coping strategies and level of usage of academic stress coping strategies of second year intermediate students may vary.

Methodology used in the study

Survey method is used in the study.

Tools used in the study

For the purpose of the study the researcher has developed the Rating Scale to assess the Academic Stress Coping Strategies of Second Year Intermediate Students.

The Academic Stress Coping Strategies Rating Scale consists of three dimensions with 42 statements i.e. Academic Stress Preventing Strategies (ASCS₁), Academic Stress Avoiding Strategies (ASCS₂) and Academic Stress Management Strategies (ASCS₃).

The validity of the tool was established by obtaining the opinion and suggestions of psychologists, educational experts, professionals working in stress related aspects. Based on the discussions, some statements were deleted and few statements were re-modified to avoid ambiguity and repetition of items in the rating scale. In view of the procedure adopted for development of the rating scale, it is said that the research tool possess face validity, content validity and construct validity. A pilot study was carried to find out the reliability and validity of the rating scale developed for the study with 65 second year intermediate students (10% of the total sample) studying in intermediate junior colleges, randomly selected from two colleges from Chittoor district. The reliability value of split of method is 0.744 and whole test reliability is 0.853. The intrinsic validity of academic stress coping strategies scale is 0.92. Hence, the tool used in the study possesses high reliability and intrinsic validity.

Locale and Sample of the Study

There are 60 government & aided and 163 private colleges intermediate junior colleges were functioning in both rural and urban areas of Chitoor district. In the first stage, the investigator has randomly selected 7% of colleges i.e. 4 government, aided and 11 private junior colleges in this district by using simple random sampling technique. There are approximately 4338 second year intermediate students are studying in the selected sample colleges. In the second stage, 15 percent i.e 651 second year intermediate students were taken as the sample of the study form the different groups such as M.PC, M.EC, Bi.PC, C.EC and H.EC by using stratified random sampling technique.

Data collection and Statistical techniques used in the Study

The developed tool was administered to the second year intermediate junior college students of East Godavari. The student's were directed to go through the instructions before rating the statements in the respective tools. The collected data was analyzed by using mean, percentages, SD, mean \pm 1SD.

Results and Discussions

To identify the level of academic stress coping straggles of second year intermediate students, mean and SD of the ASCS scores have been computed for each dimension. With the help of mean \pm 1 SD, low, moderate and high level usage of academic stress coping strategies were calculated for each dimension among intermediate students.

Table-1 shows that out of 651 intermediate students, 106 (16.3%) students are using coping strategies at high level, 461 (70.8 %) students at moderate level and the remaining 84 (12.9%) at low level.

Table-1 : The Number and Percentage of Intermediate students with Low, Moderate and High Academic Stress Coping Strategies

Academic Stress Coping Strategies Scale Dimensions	Number and Percentage of Second Year Intermediate Junior College students with Low, Moderate, High Levels of Academic Stress Coping Strategies					
	Low		Moderate		High	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Academic Stress Preventing Strategies	99	15.2	413	63.4	139	21.4

Academic Stress Avoiding Strategies	98	15.1	447	68.7	106	16.3
Academic Stress Management Strategies	92	14.1	451	69.3	108	16.6
Academic Stress Coping Strategies as a whole	84	12.9	461	70.8	106	16.3

Low : ($\geq M-SD$); Moderate (In Between); High ($\geq M+SD$)

From the above, it is inferred that, nearly 87 percent of the students are using academic stress coping strategies at moderate and high levels. 413 (653.4%) students are using *stress preventing strategies* at moderate level, 139 (21.4%) students at high level and 99 (15.2%) students at low level.

With reference to the dimension *stress avoiding coping strategies*, 447 (68.7 %) students are identified with moderate level of usage, 106 (16.3%) students with high level of usage and 98 (15.1%) students with low level usage. 451 (69.3%) students are using *stress managing strategies* at moderate level, 108 (16.6 %) students with high level and 84 (12.9%) students with low level.

It is identified from the above table that only 16 to 21% of students are using stress coping strategies at high level. On other hand, 13 to 15% of students are using stress coping strategies at low level.

To find out the mean academic stress coping strategies and level of usage of academic stress coping strategies of second year intermediate students coming under low, moderate and high levels of academic stress coping strategies (ASCS), mean and standard deviation of ASCS scores have been computed for each item. Based on mean and standard deviation, the low, moderate and high level of usage of stress coping strategies are identified by using mean ± 1 SD.

Table-2 : Mean Academic Stress Coping Strategies and the usage level of Academic Stress Coping Strategies of Second year Intermediate students in Junior Colleges

Sl.No. (1)	Academic Stress Coping Strategies (2)	Mean A.S.C.S Score (3)	Level of A.S.C.S (4)
I. Academic Stress Preventing Strategies			
1	I plan in-advance for my study schedule and for	3.31	M

	my future career.		
2	I express my feelings and thoughts to my close Friends in the college.	3.46	M
3	I organise my time for relaxation by doing exercise/Yoga/Watching TV/Reading/doing puzzles etc.	2.75	M
4	I discuss every day activities of the college and educational aspects with my parents	3.09	M
5	I keep myself from getting distracted by other thoughts or activities	3.17	M
6	I seek help and support of teachers and my well Wishers for educational choices.	3.61	H
7	I fix my goals according to my capabilities and interests.	3.82	H
8	I maintain balance in studies to keep stress at low level.	3.01	M
II. Academic Stress Avoiding Strategies			
9	I avoid persons and things that cause stress in academics	3.29	M
10	I went along as if nothing were happened.	2.98	M
11	I try to ignore it when I come across a problem	2.81	M
12	I consume alcohol or cigarettes to escape from stress	1.40	L
13	I sleep for more hours than usual to get concentration in my studies.	2.41	L
14	I made light of the stress situation and refused to get too serious about it.	2.99	M
15	I used to go to temple to participate in religious and spiritual activities.	2.79	M
16	I used to practice relaxation techniques like playing games, practice dance, listening to music and spending time with small kids to avoid academic stress.	3.17	M
17	I always maintain sense of humour by watching comedy shows in TV/pictures at home.	3.56	H
18	I use inner talk to overcome negative pattern of thinking.	2.97	M
19	I realize that I was personally responsible for my academic difficulties/failures and lectured to myself.	3.17	M
20	I just give up trying to reach my goal to avoid academic stress.	2.08	L
21	I used to set my academic goals in realistic/achievable	3.44	M
22	I always communicate the problem well to my friends to prevent conflict and make sure not to make matters worse.	3.32	M
23	I accept only the things I can do without feeling overwhelmed.	3.33	M
24	I talk about my academic stress to someone who faced the same and handle the same positively	3.15	M
III. Academic Stress Management Strategies			

25	I just concentrate on what I have to do next in my academics	3.44	M
26	I frame a plan of action in my studies to reduce stress and follow it in order to achieve my goal.	3.45	M
27	I used to listen to music in order to get rid of my academic stress.	3.41	M
28	I spend my time with my friends whenever I am under severe academic stress	3.25	M
29	I spend my time with my parents, kids in order to reduce academic stress	3.28	M
30	I break down the study related problems into smaller parts and do one part at a time	3.09	M
31	I let my emotions go to reduce stress when I am in academic stress.	2.86	M
32	I used to go for yoga, meditation and participate in games to relax myself from academic stress.	2.79	M
33	I approach a good friend or a relative for advice to reduce my academic stress.	3.32	M
34	I spend more than usual time on academics to overcome stress.	2.97	M
35	I hope that if I waited long enough, things would turn out Ok.	2.96	M
36	I spend more time along (lonlines)when I am in academic stress	2.99	M
37	I didn't let others know how I was feeling	2.84	M
38	I pray to god more than usual to come out from academic stress	2.89	M
39	I seek my lecturers advice to overcome my academic stress	3.01	M
40	I believe that every problem ultimately has some remedy / solution	3.92	H
41	I leave my worries behind when I am in the class room	3.08	M
42	When I am in problems, I don't get upset and seek balance and flexibility	2.99	M

Note: Usage Levels of Academic Stress Coping Strategies: Low: 2.66 and below;
Moderate: 2.67 to 3.51; High: 3.52 and above

With regard to **stress preventing strategies**, out of 8 strategies, only two strategies (S.No.6 and 7) such as; *seeking help and support of teachers and well wishers for educational choices* (mean value: 3.61), *fixing goals according to capabilities and interests* (mean value: 3.82) are used at high level /very frequently. The remaining 6 strategies (S.No.1,2,3,4,5 and 8) such as; *plan in- advance for their study schedule and for future career* (mean value: 3.31), *express feelings and thoughts to close friends in the college*

(mean value: 3.46), *organizing time for relaxation by doing exercise/yoga/watching TV/reading /doing puzzles etc.* (mean value: 2.75), *discuss every day activities of the college and educational aspects with their parents* (mean value: 3.09), *keeping themselves from getting distracted by other thoughts or activities* (mean value: 3.17) *maintain balance in studies to keep stress at low level* (mean value: 3.01), are the preventing strategies used by the students at moderate level.

Regarding **stress avoiding strategies**, a single coping strategy- *always maintain sense of humour by watching comedy shows in TV/pictures at home* (S.No.17) is used at high level. Similarly, twelve strategies (S.No. 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23 and 24) such as; *avoid persons and things that cause stress in academics* (mean value: 3.29), *going along as if nothing were happened* (mean value: 2.98), *try to ignore it when they come across a problem* (mean value: 2.81), *as sleep for more hours than usual to get concentration in their studies* (mean value: 2.41), *made light of the stress situation and refused to get too serious about it* (mean value: 2.99), *used to go to temple to participate in religious and spiritual activities* (mean value: 2.79), *used to practice relaxation techniques like playing games, practice dance, listening to music and spending time with small kids to avoid academic stress* (mean value: 3.17), *use inner talk to overcome negative pattern of thinking* (mean value: 2.97), *realizing that they was personally responsible for their academic difficulties/failures and lectured to themselves* (mean value: 3.17), *used to set academic goals in realistic/achievable* (mean value: 3.44), *always communicate the problem well to their friends to prevent conflict and make sure not to make matters worse* (mean value: 3.32), *accept only the things which they can do without feeling overwhelmed* (mean value: 3.33) and *talking about their academic stress to someone who faced the same stress and handle positively* (mean value: 3.15) are used at moderate level by the intermediate students to overcome stress.

On the other hand, three strategies (S.No.12, 13, 20) such as; *consuming alcohol and cigarettes to escape from stress* (mean value: 1.40), *sleep for more hours than usual to get concentration in their studies* (mean value: 2.41) and *just give up trying to reach goal to avoid academic stress* (mean value: 2.08) are the least used strategies by the students.

Believing that every problem ultimately has some remedy (mean value: 3.92) is the management strategy used by the students at high level. On other hand, the other management strategies such as; *just concentrate on what to do next in academics* (mean

value: 3.44), *frame a plan of action in their studies to reduce stress and follow it in order to achieve their goal* (mean value: 3.45), *used to listen to music in order to get rid of my academic stress* (mean value: 3.41), *spending time with friends whenever they are under severe academic stress* (mean value: 3.28), *break down the study related problems into smaller parts and do one part at a time* (mean value: 3.09), *let my emotions go to reduce stress when they are in academic stress* (mean value: 2.86) *used to go for yoga, meditation, and participate in games to relax themselves from academic stress* (mean value: 2.79), *approach a good friend or a relative for advice to reduce academic* (mean value: 3.32), *spending more than usual time on academics to overcome stress* (mean value: 2.79), *hope that if they waited for long enough, things would turn out ok* (mean value: 2.96), *spending more time alone when they are in academic stress* (mean value: 2.99), *do not let others know how they were feeling* (mean value: 2.84), *praying to god more than usual to come out from academic stress* (mean value: 2.89), *seek lecturers advice to overcome academic stress* (mean value: 3.01), *leaving worries behind when they are in classroom* (mean value: 3.08), *don't get upset and seek balance and flexibility when they were in problems* (mean value: 2.99) are used at moderate level (S.No. 25 to 39 and 41 & 42) .

From the above table it can be concluded that the junior college students are using stress coping strategies at moderate and high level. Out of 42 strategies, only four strategies (S.No. 6, 7, 17 and 40) are used at very frequently; whereas, their usage is at low in three strategies (S.No. 12, 13 and 20) and the remaining 35 strategies are used at moderate level.

Conclusions

It is noticed from the study that 16- 17% percent of students are using stress coping strategies at high level. On other hand, only 12- 15% of students are using stress coping strategies at low level. Hence, it is necessary to make the students aware of using healthy stress coping strategies to overcome their academic stress. Yoga, meditation, prayer, games & sports and extracurricular activities should be the part and parcel of the curriculum and school/college activities. Students should be guided in stress preventing strategies such as- make them aware of their abilities in fixing realistic goals, developing positive attitude, following time management, maintaining good social relationships, having good personal habits, meditation, daily physical exercise, sufficient sleep etc. Students should be trained in stress reduction techniques. There is a need for guidance and counseling centers in schools

/colleges to help the youngsters to cope with stress and train them in academic stress reducing mechanisms.

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