

UNDERSTANDING THE STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG STUDENTS OF GOVERNMENT COLLEGES OF BHAKKAR DISTRICT

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to evaluate the stress levels in the lives of college students and their coping styles regarding their stress management. Furthermore, the study examined the gender differences in perspective of stress and coping styles among college students of the Bhakkar District. A sample of $n=760$ based on the ratio of each college was selected and participated in the study. However, after eliminating invalid and spoilt questionnaires, the researcher entrained 670 questionnaires for analysis. The results of the t-test indicated that the mean score of student athletes and non-athletic students pertaining to stress is not statistically different ($p=.21 > .05$). In contrast, the analyzed data indicated that the female college students reported higher levels of stress than male college students ($p=.003 < 0.05$). That the college students' athletes reported more overall positive coping strategies than their non-athlete counterparts ($P=.002 < .05$). The analyzed data have shown that non-athletes reported using emotional and social support for stress management more often than their counterparts' athletes ($.004$ & $.003 < .05$). Statistical inferences have shown that females reported using three strategies as positive coping styles for stress, like instrumental social support, emotional support, and religious coping. The male section of the population has reported using it more often than females. The study results have shown a negative relationship between levels of stress and coping mechanisms of perceived stress among students ($(P > .135)$). The study's findings will help contribute to the existing body of literature on stress and coping styles among college students in general, particularly from the perspective of their gender differences.

Keywords: Stress Management; Coping Mechanism; Gender Differences; Sports.

Introduction

Stress is the ultimate product of external situations apparently looking difficult to cope with by the concerned person promptly. Stress is a natural phenomenon, and in a confrontation with any threatening, alarming, or difficult situation, the person is very likely to feel the stress. Stress is an individual's psychological and physical response to change in circumstance. Stress refers to the interaction between the person's thinking and the stimuli. Stress is a person's active response to the factor that causes or is likely to cause harm or threat to that person's interest (Wlodkowski, 2009).

In circumstances when a person is aware of the causative factors of stress, it is then comparatively easy to manage it in a better way (McGowan, 2006). The lifestyle in which routine is steady and activities remain normal; is a somewhat colorless and dull type of life. Ups and downs add charm and attraction to life, and stress adds action and color to life (Warikoo & Novais, 2015).

The term stressor refers to stimuli or any other factor that causes stress in one way or the other, is called stressor. Any difficult demand, fear of an unexpected situation, or pressure of some threatening situation is called a stressor. Huron (2006) stated stressors in two ways; first, stress has a

dangerous potentiality, an unpleasant external situation that results in the host's stress response and the person's thinking mechanism activated by the stressful situation. From the sports perspective, stress is the emotional strain resulting from an adverse environment before, during, or after the competition. Stress and sport are indispensable.

Literature has confirmed that sports participants have constantly been exposed to various types of difficult situations during the course of their careers (Isler & Kuntalp, 2007). As a matter of fact, human being is very much sensitive if any change arises in their environment, surroundings, or routine activities or if any challenging demand is made. This type of situation is very much common in sports. A person's emotional stability and tolerance reflect their response to the factor causing change or making a demand.

Interaction between the individual and his environment remains in progress throughout life. Response to the demand or change in the external environment may cause favoring or unfavouring effects on the individual's physical, mental and psychological condition. This type of phenomenon refers to the stressor and its output as the stress. In fact, the change, demand, or challenge itself work as the stressor which causes stress for the host. No one is immune to stress,

and, as a matter of fact, stress cannot be avoided in life. Alvesson et al. (2008) have concluded that sweaty hands, worried reactions, and fast heart beating are the clear manifestations of mental and psychological stress. In the field of sports, stress comes into action most frequently, and its output may be either positive or negative. Stress is a common experience in sports (Kellmann, 2010).

Sports always involve the fear of losing. Sometimes the spectators create tension, and sometimes the new playing area may disturb the player internally and externally; the referee's behavior may also affect the players positively or negatively. The local traditions, family background, cultural scenario, psychomotor conditioning, physiological training, skill training of the player, and the fear of a player's injury may create anxiety, ultimately leading to stress.

Stress is common to all, but it may vary from situation to situation and person to person. Even gender is considered to be the most prone factor regarding stress. The games involve victory and defeat. The consequential fact of victory and defeat is known to all besides the age, gender, and approach to the game, and sometimes the player has to pay for all that (Wilson & Pritchard, 2005). Victory always motivates the player to perform better, while the concept of losing negatively impacts the player's

performance. However, sometimes loss may lead to the enthusiasm of "Try Again," but internally, it negatively impacts the players' overall performance.

The different college, social, and co-curricular exercises support understudies and prepare them for adulthood (Shabazz, 2015). Survey the situation from a more profound viewpoint; college understudies face various difficulties in day-to-day life; subsequently, the whole thought of energizing college life is looked with numerous difficulties, which thus adds to the pressure and, if not managed, can just heighten and upset their scholarly execution, enthusiastic and social prosperity (Laughlin, 2011). College understudies are presented with different pressure factors which should be tended to without further ado by continually changing coping systems.

The college understudy's stressors incorporate inside and outside weights the earth applies to flourish and succeed, beat monetary hardships, stresses over the future, societal issues, and openings. The point of worry among college understudies has been at the center for quite a while (Simmons, 2012). Raised feelings of anxiety among understudies can result in scholarly achievements and can influence their general prosperity. Information mining is valuable to distinguish the pressure factors and

their corresponding elements influencing understudies in their college life. It helps in pressure vaccination methods for improving their learning procedure along these lines clearing the route for a superior physical, enthusiastic, and emotional wellness of understudies (Zoonoses, 2014).

Information mining is an investigation and examination of expansive amounts of information so as to find a critical example. Information mining is a moderately one-of-a-kind procedure that separates data from a influenced when they experience difficulties, for example, social, passionate, physical, and family issues (Dahl, 2004). The most critical stressors experienced by understudies incorporate high individual and outer desires and upsetting surroundings just as scholastic inspirations, for example, scholarly undertakings, positions, and college acknowledgment (Moser, 2010). Understudies trust that they will rehearse an improved lifestyle if these difficulties are evacuated. Concentrating on coping with pressure will considerably affect advanced education (Mohamed & Nagy, 2017).

The components in charge of the results, for example, enthusiastic pressure and disguised issues, are because of raised dimensions of scholastic and social pressure. While understudy's pressure has regularly been

database that is unexplored by the client. The fundamental target of Data mining is to rearrange and robotize a generally factual procedure from the information sources to show application (Roberts, 2015).

Lately, understudies experience a wide range of stressors, such as exceeding expectations in scholastics, unclear future and issues related to adjusting to college. These understudies' learning capacities and scholarly results are

connected in writing to family issues, comparative outcomes were found in concentrates by different analysts that studies of learning capacity and scholastic achievements were influenced by family issues (Van de Walle, 2006). Social help from the college, college, family, companions and tutors tremendously affects the understudy's execution and accomplishment. So also, enthusiastic, scholastic, and money-related guides are crucial qualities that determine the accomplishment of college understudies (Veremu, 2016).

College life can be unpleasant and changes the beneficial experience of an understudy; it is critical to be in the organization of family and companions while in college—relationship issues at home and in college regularly prompt pressure (Hoy & Miskel, 2015).

The most prevailing stressors were that of scholastics and examinations. The subject of scholarly pressure and college stress has been in the spotlight for a while. During each semester, college understudy frequently experiences weight because of scholarly commitment and duties, financial hardships, and ill-advised time-the-board aptitudes (Burney & Michie, 2010). In the event that pressure is adversely seen, and if feelings of anxiety turn out to be excessively high, well-being and scholastic achievements can be hampered. Different variables, including societal exercises, work requests or sentimental connections, debilitate the understudy's scholarly execution (Fiedler, Hutchins & Dodge, 2009).

Several things may cause stress, like fear of something and worry about the coming unexpected situation. These are called stressors. Stress frequently prevails in sports and sometimes favors the player, while sometimes it harms the performance. Stressors may be physical, psychological, mental, and emotional (Gross, 2008). The present advancement in psychological and clinical health has also confirmed that output of the stress is most diverse, and it varies from person to person (Marlowe, 2001).

Objectives

The following were the main objectives of the study:

1. To examine the difference in the stress level of students' athletes and their counterparts' non-athletes.
2. To survey the difference in the stress level of female college students and male college students.
3. To examine the difference in overall positive coping styles and their counterparts' non-athletes.
4. To find out the difference in mean scores on various dimensions of positive coping styles between college student athletes and non-athletes.
5. To find out the difference in mean scores on various dimensions of positive coping styles between college male students and female college students.
6. To analyze the significant relationship between stress levels and coping mechanisms of college students.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested during the study:

Ha 1. College students' athletes report higher stress levels than their counterparts' non-athletes.

Ha 2. Female college students report higher levels of stress than male college students.

Ha 3. College student athletes report more overall positive coping styles than their non-athlete counterparts.

Ha 4. College student athletes report higher mean scores on various dimensions of positive coping techniques than non-athletes.

Ha 5. College male student athletes report higher mean scores on various dimensions of positive coping techniques than female non-athletes.

Ho 6. There is no significant relationship between stress levels and the coping mechanisms of college students.

Methods and Methodology

Research Design

Different methods, such as descriptive, experimental, non-experimental, and survey, are commonly used in research. The researcher used a descriptive survey method to facilitate this research study. The descriptive method is usually employed to solve problems that exist among students, administrative behaviors, teaching methods, and curriculum design.

Justification

The descriptive research method is commonly used in social sciences. The

survey is a sub-type of descriptive research method employed to examine the social phenomenon in an organized manner. Considering the study's purpose, the research employed a descriptive survey method to explore the stress levels and coping styles among college students to utilize data to justify current conditions and practices or make more intelligent plans for improving them.

Population

Studying the whole population is difficult and sometimes impractical for a student researcher. Some practical limitations such as time, academic pressure, stipulated time for research report submission, and finance are operative in studying the whole population. In these circumstances, the process of sampling helps in making research findings economical and accurate. Bhakkar district is situated in the West of the Punjab Province. The district consists of four different Tehsil namely, Bhakkar, Darya Khan, Kaloorkot and Mankera.

Tool used for Data Collection

After studying the related literature, published articles, and also the guidance of research supervisor, it was decided to develop questionnaire which could meet the set objectives of the study. For this purpose,

the researcher developed two separate questionnaires namely General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) and Coping Mechanism Questionnaire (CMQ). These questionnaires were developed with four points scale with the following alternatives as given in the following tables.

Table 1: General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)

Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual
4	3	2	1

Table 2: Coping Mechanism Questionnaire (CMQ)

s	Sometime	Rarely	Fairly often
4	3	2	1

The preliminary draft of both the questionnaires consisted of 17 and 20 respectively for GHQ and CMQ. This preliminary draft was administered among college students to assess their reactions about different aspects of stress and coping mechanism. These items were then discussed with five experts to determine the appropriateness, relevancy and validity of the items. After scrutinizing the 37 items, 11 items were excluded because of irrelevancy and inappropriateness.

Finally, a set of 26 items (12 for GHQ and 14 for CMQ) was prepared and used for pilot testing. These items were pre-tested by selecting 30 college students. Their responses

were computed with the help of Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability was obtained as .81 and .83 respectively for GHQ and CMQ.

Reliability Statistics of GHQ

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.81	12

Reliability Statistics of CMQ

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.83	14

Data Collection Procedure

After development of the questionnaire and selection of the sample, the researcher obtained a formal approval from the Department Supervisory Committee, Department of Sports Sciences and Physical Education to conduct survey at different colleges of Bhakkar District.

The researcher then visited the respective colleges and meet the Physical Education Teachers to take her in confidence in connection with the collection of data. Purpose of the study was explained before the Physical Education Teachers. Similarly, head of the concerned colleges was also taken into confidence in this regard. Time schedule was finalized with the Physical Education teacher at the respective colleges.

As per the mutually agreed schedule, visits were made to each college on a specified date. Respondents were briefed

about the purpose of the study and different aspect of the questionnaire were explained before them. They were guided about filling up the questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed among the respondents, and they were asked to fill each column of the

questionnaires. The filled in questionnaire were collected back on the same day. After collection of the data, responses were properly analyzed and tabulated for obtaining findings and conclusions.

Results

Table 3: Stress level of students' athletes and non-athletes

Testing variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	Df	T	Sig.
Stress Level	Non-athletes	468	3.9652	.45563	(2,668)	1.09	.21
	Athletes	202	3.8648	.46313			

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 4: Stress levels of male and female students

Testing variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	Df	t	Sig.
Stress Level	Male	533	3.9540	.44654	(2,668)	2.33	.003
	Female	237	4.1640	.38212			

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 5: The overall positive coping between athletes and non-athletes

Testing variables	Category	N	Mean	Std.	Df	T	Sig.
Overall positive coping	Non-athletes	468	4.8430	.34654	(2,668)	2.37	.002
	Athletes	202	3.2540	.48212			

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 6: Difference on various dimensions of positive coping

Category		Emotional & Social Support	Humor	Sports Participation	Religious Coping
Athletes	Mean	3.6861	3.3329	3.5748	3.7682
	N	202	202	202	202
	Std. Deviation	.36979	1.07224	.71208	.58691
Non-athletes	Mean	3.4837	3.4411	3.3582	3.8831
	N	468	468	468	468
	Std. Deviation	.61639	.89786	.72590	.47351

Table 7: ANOVA

		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Emotional & Social Support	Between Groups	.533	2	.267	.936	.004
	Within Group	28.187	668	.285		
	Total	28.720	670			
Humor	Between Groups	9.473	2	4.736	5.076	.395
	Within Group	92.382	668	.933		
	Total	101.855	670			
Sports Participation	Between Groups	2.216	2	1.108	2.198	.013
	Within Group	49.919	668	.504		
	Total	52.136	670			
Religious Coping	Between Groups	2.541	2	1.270	4.619	.116
	Within Group	27.229	668	.275		
	Total	29.770	670			

Table 8: t-test for Equality of Means

	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% confidence Interval of Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Emotional & Social Support	-.861	668	.004	.09328	.10828	-.30811	.12155
Humor	-.529	668	.598	.10806	.20439	-.51357	.29744
Sports Participation	-.648	668	.013	.094471	.14613	-.38463	.19520
Religious Coping	-.207	668	.836	.02293	.11063	-.24241	.19656

Table 9: Difference on various dimensions of positive coping

Category		Emotional & Social Support	Humor	Sports Participation	Religious Coping
Male Students' athletes	Mean	3.6861	3.4512	3.7833	3.7682
	N	433	433	433	433
	Std. Deviation	.369867	.89775	.72306	.57671
Female non-athletes	Mean	3.4836	3.3319	3.3662	3.8932
	N	237	237	237	237
	Std. Deviation	.51548	1.07522	.75322	.46251

Table 10: ANOVA

		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Emotional & Social Support	Between Groups	.533	2	.267	.936	.213
	Within Group	28.187	668	.285		
	Total	28.720	670			
Humor	Between Groups	9.473	2	4.736	5.076	.003
	Within Group	92.382	668	.933		
	Total	101.855	670			
Sports Participation	Between Groups	2.216	2	1.108	2.198	.014
	Within Group	49.919	668	.504		
	Total	52.136	670			
Religious Coping	Between Groups	2.541	2	1.270	4.619	.123
	Within Group	27.229	668	.275		
	Total	29.770	670			

Table 11: t-test for equality of Means

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% confidence Interval of Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Emotional & Social Support	-.751	668	.213	.08326	.10728	-.30712	.12147
Humor	-.429	668	.003	.10705	.20338	-.51237	.29734
Sports Participation	-.548	668	.013	.08437	.14512	-.38373	.19422
Religious Coping	-.107	668	.123	.03273	.11153	-.24262	.19546

Table 12: Relationship between stress level and coping mechanism of college students

		Total Mean	Perceived Barriers
Stress Level	Pearson Correlation	1	.313
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.134
	N	670	670
Coping Mechanism	Pearson Correlation	.313	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.134	
	N	24	24

$\alpha = 0.01^{**}$

Findings

1. The results of the study indicated the calculated value for 668 df is 1.09 which is lesser than the table value (1.96) at significant level 0.05. The sig=.21 is also higher than the significant level of 0.05

($P < 0.05$) Therefore, it can be said that the means score of students' athletes and non-athletic students pertaining to stress is not statistically different.

2. The mean score and std. deviation of stress score between male and female were

measured as 3.9540 and 4.1640 respectively. Similarly, the calculated t value for 668 df is 2.33 and sig: value is .003 ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, the result is significant at 0.05 level.

3. The analyzed data demonstrated that the college students' athletes reported more overall positive coping than their non-athletes' counterparts.
4. The results indicated that that students' athletes have shown higher mean score for Emotional and Social Support and Sports Participation based on the p-values .004 and .013 respectively which is less the significant level of 0.05.
5. The results indicated that college male students' athletes have shown higher mean score for Humor and Sports Participation based on the p-values .003 and .014 respectively which is less the significant level of 0.05. Therefore, the set hypothesis is partially accepted without 2 out of 4 variables.
6. The analyzed inferences revealed that there exists insignificant relationship between stress level and coping mechanism of college students because the analyzed measurements shown that the Correlation Coefficient i.e., 'r' of stress level and coping mechanism of college

students is .313 and P value is .134 ($P > .135$).

Conclusion

This study was conducted to evaluate the stress and coping strategies among students at government girls' colleges of Bhakkar District. The study indicated both male and female students' athletes reported stress although the specific stressors did not take into measurement.

The analyzed data have shown that non-athletes reported using emotional and social support for stress management more often than their counter-parts athletes. Predictably, athletes have reported often engagement in sports activities. In order to find the gender difference between the two groups, the female college students reported higher levels of stress than male college students. The statistical inferences have shown that female reported using three strategies as positive coping styles for stress like instrumental social support, emotional support, and religious coping. The male section of the population has reported using often sports activities then females.

Apart for the above, the results of the study have shown negative relationship between levels of stress and coping mechanism of perceived stress among

students of government girls' colleges of Bhakkar District. The findings of the study lead to more in-depth studies encircling stress, coping strategies and gender alterations in athletes as well college students.

Recommendations

1. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in stress levels of college's students, therefore; it is recommended that physical education teachers, coaches and trainers may work upon this psychological area. This will help the students capable of managing their levels of stress effectively.
2. Physical education teachers, coaches and trainers may look at how athletes previously and currently deal with stress levels and how they manage their emotions and prioritize their mental health.
3. This will help the students in general and athletes in particular to understand how to best help they unlock their full athletic potential without causing great strain on not only their bodies but their minds as well.
4. The analysis of the present study indicated that both groups reported high levels of stress, therefore; further research is

suggested to investigate the stressors among college students and coping mechanism for these stressors.

5. However, coaches should be aware of the degree to which substitutes may be over- or under activated stressed prior to entering a contest.
6. During competition, the degree to which participants evidence stress should also be a constant concern to mentor, and judicious substitutions made when warranted.

Practical Implications

1. The findings of the study at hand have paramount significant on the ground that will help in contributing the existing body of literature on the topic of stress and coping styles among college students in general and particular in perspective of their gender differences.
2. While both groups reported high levels of stress overall, further research should focus on which stressors are more prevalent in which group and how to come up with ways to effectively cope with those stressors.

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