

Relationship between perceived stress and coping in children of broken and stable families

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research paper was to study the relationship between perceived stress and coping strategies in children of stable and broken families. The sample consisted of 125 children from stable families taken from different towns and residential areas and 125 from broken families, taken from different Government and Private Trusts and shelter homes in Sahiwal, Okara, Lahore, Gujranwala, and Gujrat. Urdu Translation of PSS-10 developed by Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein (1983), and Children's Coping Strategies Checklist Revision 1 (CCSC-R1) developed by Anne E. Fedorowicz (1995) were used to measure perceived stress and children's coping efforts.

The results showed that perceived stress is positively correlated with avoidance and support seeking coping while negatively correlated with active and distractive coping strategies. The results also highlighted significant differences in perceived stress and coping in relation to education.

Key words: Perceived Stress, Coping, Broken Families, Stable Families

An individual will just see a circumstance as stressful in the event if that situation is fretful for that individual and feels it is undermining or going beyond his/her inner or outside assets. Contingent upon the way a person sees the circumstances, he/she will pick particular coping techniques over others.

Most children promptly have a tendency to take part in encounters or experience circumstances that are stressful and connected with creating passionate and behavioral issues. Perception of stress and subsequently employed coping reactions have a deep rooted social segment of qualities and address the social universality of different modes of coping that were approved overwhelmingly on civic masses.

Stress is an obvious risk component for mental wellbeing issue, and has been assessed to influence more or less one in every five children of age 9-17 years as reported by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1999. Individuals have altogether different concepts regarding meaning of stress and likely the widely known is, "physical, mental, or emotional pressure or strain". In other words stress can be expressed as a state or mood experienced when an individual perceives that difficulties surpass the particular and social assets which the individual can assemble. In our society, stress is a widespread awareness that is regularly connected with a large number of negative results.

Perceived stress specifies collaborations concerning an ecological precipitant (outer stress); the functional responses of the body (distress); and an individual's cognitive, passionate, and behavioral reaction to this interaction. Stress is perceived whilst an outside event causes aversive physiological and cognitive distress in a person which surpasses his/her enthusiastic and interactive collection intended to negate the hurtful impacts of outer stressors.

According to Lazarus and Folkman, coping systems are by and large considered to have two real dimensions: managing the issue bringing on the distress (e.g., problem centered

coping) and directing the feeling connected with the stressful occasion (e.g., emotion centered coping). Problem centered coping includes immediate exertions to modify the circumstances, and additionally objective deliberations to examine and take care of the issue at hand. It may incorporate breaking down an issue into more reasonable pieces, cognitively rebuilding the issue, considering options, endeavoring to adjust the circumstances, or getting counsel or backing from others. On the other hand, emotion centered coping systems are expressive responses that are self-arranged. Responses incorporate passionate reactions (e.g., flaw toward oneself, getting furious, turning strained), preoccupation toward oneself, fantasizing about being in an alternate circumstance, or more positive responses, for example, acknowledgement, restraint, and what's more being idealistic (Endler & Parker, 1990a; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Different specialists have proposed a third fundamental dimension of coping, avoidance, which could be either task or individual oriented (Billings & Moos, 1984; Endler & Parker, 1990a). Avoidance involves participating in option exercises (e.g., substance utilization, shopping, consuming) or cognitive progressions (e.g., separating, desensitizing) to divert oneself from stress and related negative feelings.

Berman, & Turk, (1981) took a study in the domain of marital dissolution and pointed out that interpersonal and familial issues have a chief impact on generally whole emotional phase. Moreover, association with public events, stating feelings, and improving sovereignty are greatly linked to pronounced post-divorce adjustment. Skipworth, (2011) has done a research on perceived stress and depression in college students and revealed that high levels of stress, poor general health, substance abuse and sex (female) bring about noteworthy chances in forecasting that a subject may be prone to any category of depression.

Velez, Wolchik, & Sandler, have discussed practices of adaptive coping and connotations regarding coping to be applied for preventive interventions. Saffari et al. (2011) investigated the effect of stress, coping techniques and allied factors and found cognitive/emotional coping as the most persistent coping style. They revealed a significant correlation amid perceived and experienced stress.

Suldo et al. (2008) bring to light that the students of IB program perceive considerably more stress as compared to their accustomed education peers, and that precise coping styles are peculiarly akin to mental health concerns in students of IB program. Wallerstein (1985, 1987) investigated the fact that in excess of the two-third individuals experiencing stress, approximately a large portion of the individuals considered that their lifetimes were "crushed by the divorce" (Zinsmeister, p.153). She further showed that around one-third happened to be nevertheless authentically vexed and another third happened to impart that the divorce has endowed them mental challenges. A number of the individuals were still furious at their guardians for the divorce, despite the fact that time had passed, and individuals had proceeded onward.

Guidubaldi and Perry (1985) found that offspring of divorce are more inclined to perform more terrible than those in place families and reached the conclusion that the offspring of divorce are more vulnerable to "ill-use of medications, to submit brutal acts, to take their life, and to endure descendants of matrimony". According to The National Survey of Children two to four times the familiar modern culture; progeny of break up were under psychiatric consideration. They presumed '80 percent of youths in mental clinics, and 60 percent of the youngsters in psychiatric facilities' to be outcomes of divorce.

Theoretical Framework

In the present study stress and coping have central place in ascertaining the relationship between perceived stress and coping among children belonging to either broken or stable families. Theories supporting the stress are categorized into two classes i.e. systematic stress approach by Selye and psychological stress approach by Lazarus and Folkman. The Lazarus stress theory valued stress as a collective idea, i.e., stress is not regarded as a particular sort of external incitement nor a particular paradigm of physiological, behavioral, or individual responses, instead it is seen as a relationship (liaison) between people and their environments.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) recognized that problem centered coping refers to coping efforts that are coordinated at overseeing or changing a circumstance that is bringing about distress or pain and emotion centered coping alludes to coping endeavors coordinated towards the regulation of feelings or distress. As opposed to Lazarus and Folkman, Moos and his colleagues recognize coping techniques on the premise of their focus. The center of approach coping is towards a stressor i.e. to modify the approach with which one thinks about the problem, though the center of avoidant coping is away from a stressor i.e. to avoid problem by denying.

Rationale of the Study

In today's world, a large number of children are facing stress and modified ways are employed for the perception of stress and coping strategies to counter that stress. The extent to which stress is perceived and use of coping skills also fluctuate within children as it is evident that human behavior changes in different situations and from person to person, so every child has his own mind set, behaviors, learning, and circumstances

which affect their perception of stress and how to cope with that stress.

In Pakistan, there are extreme social problems which leads towards divorce and separation, death of the family member related to terrorism, unemployment which ultimately leads parents to leave their children in shelter homes and the similar ones. As a result of these conditions, children develop a perception of stress according to the severity of the circumstances in which they are living. Contingent upon this perception they choose the way to cope with these stressors and this depends on the environment to which they belong i.e. whether they are brought up in a normal and stable home environment or they belong to a broken family. Identifying relationship between perceived stress and coping among children from broken or stable families may add to better understand the problems children face in coping with the stress. It will prepare for the future researches to devise ways to better the living of suffering children.

For this reason hypotheses have been framed as 1. Perceived stress would be positively correlated to avoidant and support seeking coping strategies and negatively to active and distractive coping strategies; 2. There would be significant differences in Perceived Stress and Coping on the basis of demographic variables.

Method

Participants

A sample of 250 was selected through purposive sampling technique from different Govt. and Private trusts and institutes, shelter homes and residential areas of Sahiwal, Okara, Lahore, Gujranwala, and Gujrat.

Research Design

This research is of quantitative nature. To investigate the relationship of perceived stress and coping in children from broken and stable families Survey design was used. Purposive sampling technique was employed to draw the sample out of the population.

Instruments

Perceived Stress Scale 10-Item (PSS-10) Urdu Translation. The Perceived Stress Scale created by Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein (1983), measures one's perception of stress related to everyday life. In this research we used PSS-10 Urdu translation courtesy of Aneeqa Mariam, Asra Sarwar, Rashida Maqsood, Anum Bashir, and Kiran Aamir, and project supervisor Mamoona Ismail Luna, all of International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. This scale is a 10-item, Likert type instrument having five response set categories ranging from 'Never' for the lowest score of '0' to 'Very Often' for the highest score '4'. The PSS measures the degree to which one's life situations are assessed as stressful. The scale is scored by summing the items after reversing the positively stated items (item no. 4, 5, 7, and 8). In previous studies, reported Cronbach's alpha range from 0.78 to 0.86 having good internal consistency. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.57.

Children's Coping Strategies Checklist Revision 1 (CCSC-R1). The Children's Coping Strategies Checklist (CCSC) is a self-report inventory developed by Anne E. Fedorowicz, which helps children describe their coping efforts. The items for the scale are derivative of several sources. It consists of 54 items each of which belongs to different subscales of four major coping strategies i.e., active coping strategies, support seeking strategies, avoidance strategies, and distraction strategies. The scoring is done by first taking the

mean of each subscale items and then taking the mean of four main scales. In previous researches Cronbach's alpha coefficient fall in the range of 0.60 to 0.70 and sometimes $\alpha > 0.70$. In present study Cronbach' alpha is 0.83.

Procedure

The sample was approached individually, using the survey research design for data collection. All the subjects were primed about the objective of the study and ensured that the data will be used only for research purpose. The respondent's parents were asked for their willingness to allow their children to be a part of the study by filling the consent form. They were requested to give answers honestly. The respondents were assured of the secrecy of their responses and were briefed about the scales. Two questionnaires were administered individually and they were demanded to give accurate and truthful answers and not to leave any item unanswered. They were encouraged to ask for any ambiguity prior to attempting the questionnaire. At the end all the children and their guardians were thanked for their cooperation and presented the children with sweets.

After the completion of data collection, the scales were scored according to the scoring keys and then put the scores and demographic variables in the tabular form. According to the requirement of each research hypothesis, information was examined by utilizing Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 17.0).

Results

Descriptive statistics were used to measure mean, standard deviation and alpha reliability. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to analyze relationship among Perceived Stress and Coping strategies. Preliminary analysis was done to deny violation of assumption of normality, to ensure linearity and

multi-co-linearity. The analysis of variance was done to see the differences in perceived stress and coping on the basis of demographic variables.

Table 1: Pearson correlation of Perceived Stress and Coping Strategies

Scales	1	2	3	4	5
TPSS	1	-.035	.130*	.128*	-.107
ACTIVE		1	.470**	.477**	.138*
AVOIDANT			1	.288**	.155*
SUPPORT				1	.120
DISTRACTION					1

Note: TPSS=Total of Perceived Stress Scale

Table 1 shows the correlation among perceived stress and coping strategies including active, avoidant, support seeking, and distraction strategies. These statistics are depicting negative correlation among perceived stress and active coping strategies $r = -.03$ and distractive coping strategies $r = -.10$. These results are illustrating positive correlation among perceived stress and avoidant coping strategies $r = 0.13$ and support seeking coping dimensions $r = 0.12$.

Table 2: One Way Analysis of Variance for the scores of perceived stress and coping strategies of active, avoidant, support seeking and distractive dimensions in relation to age (N=250)

Scales	Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	p
TPSS	Between Groups	32.832	2	16.416	.574	.564
	Within Groups	7063.268	247	28.596		
	Total	7096.100	249			
ACTIVE	Between Groups	.208	2	.104	.498	.608
	Within Groups	51.581	247	.209		
	Total	51.789	249			
AVOIDANT	Between Groups	.124	2	.062	.325	.723
	Within Groups	46.994	247	.190		
	Total	47.117	249			
SUPPORT	Between Groups	.106	2	.053	.138	.871

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	Within Groups	95.369	247	.386		
	Total	95.476	249			
DISTRACTION	Between Groups	.647	2	.323	.920	.400
	Within Groups	86.796	247	.351		
	Total	87.443	249			

Note: TPSS = Total of Perceived Stress Scale

One way ANOVA was administered to investigate the differences of perceived stress and coping strategies on the basis of age. There were no significant differences in perceived stress and coping strategies of children with 3 age groups.

Table 3: One Way Analysis of Variance for the scores of perceived stress and coping strategies of active, avoidant, support seeking and distractive dimensions in relation to education (N=250)

Scales	Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	p
TPSS	Between Groups	502.750	3	167.583	6.253	.000
	Within Groups	6593.350	246	26.802		
	Total	7096.100	249			
ACTIVE	Between Groups	.159	3	.053	.253	.859
	Within Groups	51.630	246	.210		
	Total	51.789	249			
AVOIDANT	Between Groups	.334	3	.111	.585	.021
	Within Groups	46.783	246	.190		
	Total	47.117	249			
SUPPORT	Between Groups	.661	3	.220	.572	.038
	Within Groups	94.814	246	.385		
	Total	95.476	249			
DISTRACTION	Between Groups	1.578	3	.526	1.507	.213
	Within Groups	85.865	246	.349		
	Total	87.443	249			

Note: TPSS = Total of Perceived Stress Scale

One way ANOVA was administered to investigate the differences of perceived stress and coping strategies on the basis of education. There were significant differences in coping strategies of Avoidance Coping $F(3, 246) = 0.585, (.021), p < .05$

and Support Seeking Coping $F(3, 246) = 0.572, (.038), p < .05$ in children with 4 education groups. There was a significant difference only in perceived stress scores that is $F(3, 246) = 6.253, (.000), p < .05$.

Despite of arriving at statistical significance the real difference in mean scores of perceived stress was little. The impact size, figured utilizing estimated time of eta squared, was .07. Post-hoc examinations utilizing the Tukey HSD test demonstrated that the mean scores for group 1 ($m = 24.4, SD = 3.50$) was not altogether the same as group 4 ($m = 18.05, SD = 5.87$). Groups 2 and 3 didn't essentially vary from group 1.

Post-hoc examinations utilizing the Tukey HSD test demonstrated that the mean scores for group 2 ($m = 21.5, SD = 4.46$) was different from group 4 ($m = 18.05, SD = 5.87$). Groups 1 and 3 didn't vary in effect from group 2

Post-hoc examinations utilizing the Tukey HSD test demonstrated that the mean scores for group 3 ($m = 20.2, SD = 5.13$) was different from group 4 ($m = 18.05, SD = 5.87$). Groups 1 and 2 didn't vary in effect from group 3.

Regardless of arriving at statistical significance the real difference in mean scores of avoidant coping dimension was little. The impact size, figured utilizing estimated time of eta squared, was .007.

Despite of arriving at statistical significance the real difference in mean scores of support seeking coping was little. The impact size, figured utilizing estimated time of eta squared, was .006.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-values for stable and broken families of Perceived Stress and Coping among children (N=250).

Variables	Children of Stable Families (n = 125)		Broken Family		T	p	95%CI	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD				
TPSS	18.7	5.37	21.3	4.98	-4.04	.000	-3.93,-1.35	-0.51
Active	2.73	0.41	2.79	.49	-1.04	.299	-0.17,0.05	-0.13
Avoidant	2.59	.40	2.52	.46	1.21	.226	-0.04,0.17	0.15
Support	2.35	.60	2.41	.63	-0.51	.611	-0.19,0.11	-0.06
Distraction	2.76	.62	2.71	.55	0.57	.564	-0.10,0.19	0.07

The results in the table 4 show that there are significant differences in perceived stress on the basis of broken and stable family type and no significant differences were found in relation to coping strategies.

Discussion

The results showed negative relationship among perceived stress, active and distractive coping strategies. The research done by Saffari et al. (2011) publicized that majority of adolescents had no concern with problem solving coping strategies or they were unaware of how to use them. This result discloses inevitability of the practice of stress management for education in youngsters. We can realize this outcome as children may not feel like mixing and socializing under stress, would not like to discuss their problems with others and in their effort to be alone; they retain themselves from others as much as possible. This finding is unanimous to Kausar and Munir's research which revealed that youngsters who are a victim of financial stressors used a smaller amount of active coping while frequently used coping styles that focused on externalizing feelings.

The findings of the current study depicted that there is a significant positive relationship between perceived stress and avoidance coping strategies and support seeking coping strategies. So this study reveals that when someone has a perception of stress then he/she does not use the avoidance coping strategies to the same level. Secure people perceived a lot of offered support from friends and family, and wanted a lot of social support in response to fret. Though preoccupied adults additionally sought social support in response to fret, they additionally cared-for use escape / avoidance methods. Dismissing and fearful people were a lot of less possible to hunt social support, and were a lot of possible to distance themselves in some contexts.

The study conducted by Saffari et al. (2011) presented that adolescents in their study mostly reported apprehensions about the future and academic related concerns. Most subjects of the study stated that they use cognitive/emotional and avoiding coping styles. This finding could be taken in the way that under stress children want to be alone and do not want to share their feelings. During this provisional period, the best way appears to be denial of the stressful event or dealing it by an emotional response.

The results depicted significant differences in perceived stress and coping on the basis of education. There is a significant difference in perceived stress and support seeking coping dimension. The children who are educated are more capable of perceiving stress and coping in contrast to the children who are un-educated or had lesser education.

Conclusion

Four coping strategies and perceived stress were analyzed in relation to the demographic variables including age, gender, and education. Only education category shows significant differences between perceived stress and coping strategies. The findings from overall results conclude that there are significant differences in perceived stress and coping strategies in children of stable as well as broken families. Also the perceived stress positively correlated with avoidant and support seeking coping and negatively correlated with active and distractive coping strategies.

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