Role of self esteem and coping style on academic performance among postgraduate students in India

Manikandaprabu Murugesan (1)

,Sandra Buela (2),

Rameshbabu Tamarana (3)

Author(s) Affiliation

(1) Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Allahabad, Faculty of Arts, Prayagraj (Allahabad), India (Corresponding Author*)

(2) Career Counsellor, Edu & Beyond Counselling services, Davangere, India.

(3) Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore, India.

Abstract

The present study has been conducted to find out if there are any relationship between self-esteem and coping style on academic performance among post graduate students in the Indian scenario. The study conducted during the year of 2020-22 at COVID situation. A convenient sampling technique used to select a sample of 151 respondents. Descriptive statistics used to profile the participants. Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regressions were performed to understand relationship and influences. The findings indicated that there were significant positive relationships between self-esteem and coping styles of the students. Multiple regressions revealed that self-esteem would be a significant predictor of academic performance of the students.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Coping style, Academic performance

Background of the study

Early adulthood is a period of a significant developmental transit from dependency of childhood to the self-sufficiency of adulthood. It's the time of major changes that occur in family, school, and peers. These changes, together with life's daily exposures, often produce varying levels of stress, making it domineering that adults develop effective coping strategies (Simpura, 1998). Coping has been defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as 'a package of behavioural and cognitive responses that are designed to tolerate, master or reduce the demands of stressful events.' Inorder to have optimum level of tolerance one should have better self-esteem.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is referred to as positive or negative orientation toward oneself; and overall evaluation of one's worth or value. It's a component of self-concept and defines it as an individual's set of thoughts and feelings about his or her own worth and importance. That may be a positive or negative attitude toward oneself. It was noted that one's positive hope, will and desires are the key to most college students academic success.

Students who feel positive about themselves have less sleepless nights, less likely to be affected by conformity; are least likely to use drugs and alcohol; are more determined even in difficult tasks; are happier and more sociable and more tend to perform better academically (Devata Gasti et al., 2015). Self esteem may be one of the internal energy that drives ones' goals accomplished though, but one might face many obstacles in their pathway. Attainment of goals can also be moderated by the kind coping measure one would tend to follow.

Coping

In order to cope up with problems in life, some may seek support by discussing the problems with parents, peers or other concerned persons. Few may search for possible solutions and others may try to withdraw from the stressors (Krenke, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2009). Lyons, Huebner, & Hills, (2015) conducted a study and results suggest that personality, environmental stressors and coping behaviours may play a role in the development of life satisfaction early.

School counselling services and educators can utilize this significant information to tailor services to individual needs. For example, knowing that there are gender differences in the way students cope with stress may indicate to teachers that male and female students with low self-esteem need special interventions and social support during stressful periods. These students can be taught more direct and positive ways of coping, thereby increasing their repertoire of coping strategies for use in the future (Chapman & Mullis, 1999). Going by the literature the present study is aimed at studying the role of self-esteem and coping style on academic performance.

Academic Performance

The pressure to perform well in the examination or test and time allocated makes an academic environment very stressful (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). Besides this it's likely to affect psychological wellbeing (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003). In order to reduce the stress level among the students the curriculum should be framed in such a way that it does not feel burdensome for the students with timely intervals and vacations, which might help in refreshing the students themselves from their stress.

Methods

Research design

The current study utilized correlational design to determine to what extent self-esteem and coping style related to academic performance among postgraduate students.

Data collection tools

Data collection has been collected using the two questionnaires such as:

1. Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Devata Gasti et al., 2015)
2. Coping style scale (Billings, A., & Moos, R. H., 1981)

Rosenberg self-esteem scale

Ten-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative

feelings about the self. The scale is identified to be unidimensional. All items are answered using a 5-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The scale generally has high reliability: test-retest correlations are in the range of 0.82 to 0.88 and Cronbach alpha values are in the range of 0.77 to 0.88 (Devata Gasti et al., 2015)

Strongly agree=1, agree=2, neutral=3 disagree=4 strongly disagree=5

Coping scale

The coping scale has 12 items (Yes/No) emotional coping=6 items and problem-oriented coping= 6 items respectively. The items were extracted from the work done by Billings, A., & Moos, R. H. (1981).

Sample size

Sample size consisted of 151 students of post-graduation from various colleges across India, in which 76 were girls and 75 boys. The age of the samples ranged from 21-25 years.

Sampling technique

Convenient sampling technique was used in this study. Convenient sampling is a specific type of non-probability sampling method, which depends on data collection from the population who are suitably available to contribute to the project.

Data collection procedures

A multi question questionnaire was used to administer to participants in colleges through online mode. Both the questionnaire administered in English language and simple wording. Firstly, briefly introduced to students about research, and explained briefly about the questionnaire, and then both questionnaires filled by students, all the data kept confidential and assured. Almost 15 – 20 minutes took students to fill up a questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Collected data has been analysed with the help of SPSS (IBM version 21.0) package. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis was conducted to examine the link of self-esteem and gratitude and then t-test analysis is carried out to see the difference in experience of male and female regarding self-esteem and gratitude.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Profile of the participants

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	75	49.67%
Female	76	50.33%
Total	151	100%

Table 2: Relationship between self-esteem and coping style on Academic performance

	Emotion focused coping	Problem focused coping	Academic Performance
Self esteem	0.422**	0.351**	0.889**
Emotion focused coping		-0.257*	0.367**
Problem focused coping			0.297*

Note: *_Significant at 0.05 level   **_ Significant at 0.01 level

It is noted from table number; 2 that self-esteem was significantly positively correlated with both emotional focused coping (r= 0.422) and problem-solved coping (r=0.351). All the

factors like self-esteem, emotion-focused coping and problem solved coping were positively correlated with academic performance. The students who have higher self-esteem possess the coping strategies to combat the challenges in their academic as well personal life (Devata Gasti et al., 2015).

Table 3a: Influence of self-esteem and coping style on Academic performance

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Model Summary
(Constant)	30.120	2.155		13.97	0.001	F= 176.717
Emotion focused coping	-0.075	0.421	-0.009	0.17	0.859	p=0.001 r^2= 0.783
Problem focused coping	-0.004	0.374	-0.001	-0.11	0.991	
Self esteem	1.174	0.67	0.889	17.60	0.001	

It can be observed that from the table no; 3a emotional coping and problem solving coping was not shown any influence over academic performance. On the other hand, self-esteem positively and significantly influenced the academic performance among students. Coping is not a one-time reaction rather it's a process in which a person uses different techniques to adjust with external demands.

Table 3b: Trimmed analysis

Influence of self-esteem on Academic performance

Model 2	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Model Summary
Constant	29.963	1.513		19.80	0.001	F= 537.180
						r^2= 0.783
						p=0.001
Self-esteem	1.169	0.050	0.885	23.17	0.001	

It was also noted that from the table no: 3b when the non-predictors (i.e., coping styles: emotional and problem focused coping) were removed from the regression feeder, self-esteem was found to have better influence over the academic performance. The F value and r^2 has been significantly improved than the previous multiple regression analysis.

The findings are consistent with the study conducted by Arshad et al (2015) that a significant relationship existed between self-esteem and academic performance of the students. In contrast, a survey conducted in Kerala indicated that there was no significant relationship between self-esteem and academic aspirations (M & Ravindranathan, 2018). It can be understood that actual academic performance is something different from academic aspirations.

Going by the present study's findings, no matter whether the student follows emotion focused coping or problem oriented coping as long he/she holds a higher level of self-esteem it's going to be helpful in achieving the success of one's education. Hence it's advised to measure the students' level of self-esteem and boost their self-esteem if they lack it. So that it can be

reflected in students' academic performance. During Covid-19 pandemic situation, the majority of the students started attending classes online. However, in spite of having natural hurdles those who had higher levels of self-esteem were found to have better academic performance.

Conclusion

Keeping the outcomes of this present study it can be concluded students do possess either emotional and problem oriented coping or either one of them. However, Self-esteem was found to be one of the best predictors of academic performance among post-graduate students with special reference to COVID-19 scenario. Moreover, higher self-esteem is one of the significant factors that would help the students to view themselves as active and capable persons to promote changes through effort and higher goals in their career which might cause them to learn new things.

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