

The Mediating Role of Coping Styles on the Relationship between Self-Esteem and Emotional Well-Being among University Students

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Extended Abstract

Aim

As a result of attempting to meet the demands of academic life, students encounter numerous stressful situations throughout their academic careers, which can be detrimental to their well-being by fostering negative emotional experiences. Based on the existing body of evidence, while it is unavoidable to encounter frustrating experiences during one's time as a student, the deterioration in optimal psychological functioning may vary among individuals. In other words, a portion of the variation in the multiple consequences of confronting motivating experiences among students can be accounted for by the variation in their coping ability profiles, according to established experimental and theoretical foundations. The coping process theory (Lazarus, 2006) places significant emphasis on the notion that variations in the outcomes are attributable to differences in the ability profiles of individuals when assuming the roles of several mediating causal mechanisms. By referencing the logic of the process and the stances of the coping process theory, it becomes feasible to comprehend the distinction in the consequences of confronting stressful situations. In this process-oriented conceptual logic, the information context of the mediating causal mechanisms provides significance to the comprehensibility of the causal link between the antecedents and the consequences. Hence, the present study investigated the potential mediating role of coping styles in the association between emotional well-being and self-esteem in a sample of male and female university students.

Methodology

A total of 300 university students (150 male and 150 female) enrolled at Shahid Beheshti University during the initial six months of the academic year 2017-2018 participated in this correlational study. They were administered the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations-Short Form (CISS-SF), and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). The study employed statistical path analysis with a model-fitting approach to examine the mediating role of coping styles in the association between emotional well-being and self-esteem among university students of both genders (male and female).

Findings

Maximum likelihood (ML) estimation was applied to path analysis in order to investigate the hypothesized causal relationships. Due to the absence of agreement in the literature regarding the most effective indices of fit, the researchers opted to utilize a combination of goodness of fit indices, residual error terms, modification indices, and the expected parameter change accordingly. Self-esteem has a significant and positive relationship with task-oriented coping and positive affect, but a significant and negative relationship with emotion-oriented and avoidance-oriented coping and negative affect, according to the matrix correlation results. In addition, the results indicated that task-oriented conditioning exhibited a positive and significant correlation with positive affect, while it had a significant and negative association with negative affect. Furthermore, a significant and negative correlation was identified between emotion-focused coping strategies and positive affect, as demonstrated in Table 2. Similarly, a noteworthy and positive correlation was observed between emotion-focused coping strategies and negative affect.

Conclusion

In accordance with the tenets of the coping process model, the findings of this study indicate that in order to comprehend the interpretive capabilities of coping strategies in relation to stressful experiences among students attempting to meet the demands of academic life, it is necessary to employ a model that incorporates both preparatory and final components and to adopt a process-oriented approach to such an inquiry. Hence, in accordance with the stances of the coping process model, the incorporation of a process approach is crucial for the pursuance of the principle of realism in the evaluation of the functional attributes of strategies for managing stressful experiences. In general, the findings of this study indicated that by enhancing the coping mechanisms of students, it is possible to elevate their level of well-being and protect them from distressing situations. Nonetheless, these results must be evaluated in consideration of the study's constraints. For instance, the correlational and cross-sectional designs of the study preclude the establishment of causal relationships.

Keywords: Coping Styles for Stressful, Emotional Well-Being, Mediation Analysis, Self-Esteem.