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Hope as a Predictor of Coping among College Students

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Abstract

The main objectives of this study are to investigate the relationship between hope and coping and to investigate whether hope acts as a predictor of coping among undergraduate and postgraduate students. 180 undergraduate and postgraduate students from various districts of Haryana (India) were recruited for this study. Self-report measures including 'The Adult State Hope Scale' and 'Ways of Coping scale' were used to collect the data from the sample. The obtained data was statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics, bivariate correlation, and regression analysis on SPSS. The outcomes of the study depicted that hope is significantly and positively correlated with certain dimensions of coping including problem-focused, seeking social support, focusing on the positive, tension reduction, keep to self as well as overall coping. Also, hope emerges as a significant predictor of overall coping including problem-focused, seeking social support, focusing on the positive, tension reduction, and keep to self. Hope is an essential factor that can lead to problem-solving coping rather than emotional-focused coping. People who have a hopeful outlook in life are more likely to view obstacles and challenges as temporary and solvable, which further promotes their potential to face the challenges with a sense of control.

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Introduction

'Coping is the action we take today, but hope is the promise that tomorrow can be better'

-Unknown

In recent years the academic world has taken positive psychology very seriously and there is an increasing emphasis on understanding the psychological side of student's success and happiness. Among these, hope has emerged as one very strong predictor of several positive outcomes, particularly concerning students' coping strategies with personal character and academic adversities. Hope, normally defined as the belief that one can be successful at what one desires through motivation and pathways (Snyder, 2002), is central to how people may make sense of complex situations. Hope may work as a protective element that improves students' capacity to handle stress, overcome challenges, and succeed since they are constantly faced with the demands of academic achievement, social connections, and personal growth.

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Hope

According to psychological research, "hope is a cognitive and motivational construct that encompasses pathway thinking—the perception of being able to come up with strategies to reach goals—and agency thinking, which is the conviction that one can start and maintain action toward those goals" (Snyder, 2002). According to Snyder's Hope Theory, those who have higher levels of hope are more likely to be resilient in the face of adversity because they have the will and mental flexibility to overcome obstacles. This double aspect of hope implies that it not only increases one's perceived ability to accomplish goals but also gives one the mental adaptability to come up with other plans for getting there, particularly if first efforts are unsuccessful (Rand & Cheavens, 2009).

An increasing amount of research indicates that hope is relevant in educational contexts and that it has a favorable association with academic achievement, emotional well-being, and successful coping mechanisms. Hopeful students have typically higher targets; stay focused on their aims, and are persistent in the face of adverse situations (Snyder et al., 2002). In addition, hope is connected to adaptive coping strategies including seeking out social support for overcoming problems, which insistence its potentiality as a python of how students handle challenges and stresses (Feldman & Kubota, 2015).

Coping

Humans use behavioral and mental mechanisms known as 'coping' to manage the demands of stressful situations on themselves as well as the outside. Coping is crucial for handling the different demands that come with being a student, such as duties from academics, interpersonal problems, and worries about the future. Good coping strategies can reduce the harmful effects of stress, improve mental well-being, and improve academic achievement. We can divide coping mechanisms into two primary categories using Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress and coping: emotion-focused coping, which attempts to control the psychological stress response, and problem-focused coping, which entails attempting to alter the stressful circumstance (Lazarus, 1993).

Students who engage in coping strategies that focus on problems are more inclined to organize their studies ahead of time or approach lecturers for help when they need it to meet their academic commitments. On the other hand, emotion-focused coping could mean calling a friend for support or practicing an hour of breathing exercises to alleviate stress. Previous research has revealed that how youth cope may also contribute significantly to the way they see themselves (i.e., self-perception). For instance, while problem-centred coping may positively relate to academic success and lower stress, emotion-focused coping depends on the situation as well as the individual ability to affect regulation which can be either adaptive or maladaptive (Skinner et al., 2003).

The field of psychology has a growing interest in how individuals cope with stress and adversity, leading researchers to further explore hope as it relates to coping. More specifically, high-expectancy individuals engage in problem-focused coping and are more likely to plan their paths of action (Chang, 1998) through positive goal-striving efforts that may serve as realization pathways toward challenges bravely met with solutions. Feldman and Dreher (2012) stated that not only do optimists have a better attitude, but they also adapt their interpretation of challenging circumstances to reduce the emotional response which adds further to resiliency.

Within the academic setting, hope has a significant role in predicting students' capacity to manage academic stress. According to Snyder et al. (2002), college students who had greater hope levels were also more likely to set reasonable academic objectives, ask for assistance when necessary, and persevere through setbacks. Additionally, these students showed a lower propensity to use avoidance coping mechanisms like disengagement or procrastination, which are frequently linked to subpar academic performance (Ciarrochi et al., 2015). For students in particular, the correlation between hope and adaptive coping is favorable since adaptive coping not only helps students succeed academically but also maintains their general well-being and mental health.

With increased rates of stress, anxiety, and depression among students, the mental health of students is a developing issue at educational institutions around the globe (Beiter et al., 2015). In this particular situation, hope is a protective factor that can improve psychological well-being and function as a buffer against the detrimental effects of stress. According to research, more hopeful students tend to be less anxious and depressed because they have greater faith in their capacity to overcome obstacles and realize their objectives (Snyder, 2002). Moreover, hope has been demonstrated to support emotional regulation, which is essential for controlling the strong emotions that frequently accompany pressures in the personal and academic spheres (Gallagher & Lopez, 2009).

With the rising number of students experiencing mental health problems, encouraging optimism might be a useful tactic for strengthening psychological resilience and improving students' stressresiliency. Hope-enhancing therapies have been shown to improve students' capacity for coping and general well-being. Examples of these interventions include goal-setting workshops and hope-based psychotherapy (Cheavens et al., 2006). Therefore, understanding the role of hope as a coping prediction is essential to developing interventions that support children's emotional and academic well-being.

Objectives

- To study the relationship between hope and coping.
- To study whether hope predicts coping.

Hypotheses

- There shall be a significant relationship between hope and coping.
- Hope shall be a positive predictor of coping.

Method

Participants

The sample for the present study includes 180 undergraduate and postgraduate students who were selected from various collegesin Hisar (Haryana) India. The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to collect the sample:

Inclusive criteria

- Voluntary participation
- Age range between 18-30 years
- Can read and write English and Hindi

Exclusive criteria

- Not willing to participate in the study
- Participants having any severe psychiatric or medical illness.
- Cannot read and write English and Hindi

Procedure

After the selection of the sample, data was collected from the sample using the self-report measures including 'The Adult State Hope Scale' and 'Ways of Coping scale'.

Measures

Ways of Coping scale

The Ways of Coping scale developed by Folkman and Lazarus (1985) was used to identify the pattern of thoughts and behavior, an individual uses to cope with a specific stressful situation. This scale includes 66 items and a 4-point Likert scale response format i.e., '0 = Not used, 1 = Used somewhat, 2 = Used Quite A Bit, and 3 = Used A Great Deal'. The whole scale is divided into eight sub-scales which are 'Problem-focused coping, Wishful thinking, Detachment, Seeking Social Support, Focusing on the positive, Self-blame, Tension reduction, and keep to self'. Cronbach's alpha for these subscales are 0.88, 0.86, 0.74, 0.82, 0.70, 0.76, 0.59, and 0.65 respectively.

Adult state hope scale

The Adult State Hope Scalegiven by Snyder et al. (1996)consists of six items that help assess the hope level of the respondent was also used. An 8-point Likert scale response format is used in this scale i.e., from 'Definitely False to Definitely True'. The median Cronbach's alpha for both subscales is 0.91. Thus, the scale possesses good psychometric properties.

Results

The obtained data was statistically analyzed on SPSS-26 (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) using descriptive statistics, bivariate correlation,

and regression analysis.Table 1 represents the correlational analysis of the data.

Table 1 depicted that hope has a significant and positive correlation with overall coping (r=.289, p<.01). Hope was also found to be positively correlated with certain dimensions of coping including problem-focused coping (r=.418, p<.001), seeking social support (r=.200, p<.01), focusing on the positive (r=.441, p<.01), tension reduction (r=.293, p<.01), keep to self (r=.196, p<.01). No significant correlation of hope was found with other sub-variables including wishful thinking, detachment, and self-blame. These results imply that a higher level of hope will lead to higher positive coping strategies including problem-focused coping, seeking social support, focusing on the positive, tension reduction, keep to self, and overall coping. So, our first hypothesis stating *'there shall be a significant relationship between hope and coping has been accepted*. Yet, the results also indicate that hope has a negative relationship with wishful thinking, detachment, and self-blame, but that relationship is not found to be significant. Table 2 indicates the linear regression analysis for coping with hope as a predicting variable.

Table 2 depicted that hope is a significant predictor of problem-focused coping with a coefficient value of .481 (F = 53.448, p<.001), this represents that hope explains a 23.1% variance in problem-focused coping.Hope is a significant predictor of seeking social support with a coefficient value of .200 (F=7.429, p<.01), this represents that hope explains 40% variance in seeking social support.Hope is a significant predictor of focusing on the positive with a coefficient value of .441 (F=43.016, p<.001), this represents that hope explains 19.5% variance in focusing on the positive.Hope is a significant predictor of tension reduction with a coefficient value of .086 (F=16.730, p<.001), this represents that hope explains an 8.6% variance in tension reduction.Hope is a significant predictor of keep to self with a coefficient value of .196 (F=7.095, p<.01), this represents that hope explains 3.8% variance in keep-to-self. Hope is a significant predictor of overall coping with a coefficient value of .289 (F=16.161, p<.001), this represents that hope explains 8.3% variance in overall coping. These results indicate that hope is a significant predictor of positive coping so, our second hypothesis stating that *'hope positively predicts coping'* is also accepted.

Table 1: Correlational analysis

Variables	*Hope*
Problem Focused	.481**
Wishful Thinking	-.090
Detachment	-.045
Seeking Social Support	.200**
Focusing on the Positive	.441**
Self-Blame	-.023
Tension Reduction	.293**
Keep to Self	.196**
Cope	.289**

*Note: '**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)'*

Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study provide valuable information on the relationship between hope and ways of coping among students, which adds to the growing body of research that investigates how psychological variables impact coping behaviors. The findings indicate that the strongest correlation between coping strategies centered on problems and hope was discovered. The aforementioned outcomes can be explained by the fact that enthusiastic students are more likely to feel motivated and capable of achieving their goals. (Snyder et al., 2002). This is most likely because optimistic pupils feel more inspired to achieve their objectives and adapt to overcoming obstacles.

According to Snyder's Hope Theory, hopeful people possess both the means (pathways, or the ability to think) and the willingness (agency) to pursue their goals. Furthermore, the second construct of hope-orienting contentment was shown to be substantially correlated with optimists. This suggests that students who exhibit a more optimistic outlook and a higher level of hope are also more likely to perceive their barriers in a positive light. This lends credence to the broaden-and-build hypothesis in general, which holds that positive thoughts and emotions can help people see their environment more broadly and develop resilience for adversity in the future (Fredrickson, 2001).

Table 2: Regression analysis for the predictor of hope

Variable	β	*R^2Change*	*Adjusted R^2*	*F*	*P*
Problem-focused	.481	.231	.227	53.448	.000
Wishful thinking	-.900	.008	.003	1.454	.229
Detachment	-.450	.002	-.004	.367	.546
Seeking social support	.200	.400	.350	7.429	.007
Focusing on the positive	.441	.195	.190	43.016	.000
Self-blame	-.023	.001	-.005	.094	.760
Tension reduction	.293	.086	.081	16.730	.000
Keep to self	.196	.038	.033	7.095	.008
Coping	.289	.083	.078	16.161	.000

Highlighting the positive aspects of things can serve as a cognitive stress-reduction technique to assist students in maintaining their mental pillars throughout trying situations. Because optimism has a negative correlation with restraint, optimistic students are more likely to use coping mechanisms to control their stress on a psychological and biological level. Some examples of these coping mechanisms include engaging in physical or mental activities anytime they are experiencing depression. This is consistent with other studies that suggest hope fosters improved emotional control and decreased anxiety (Gallagher & Lopez, 2009). Supporters frequently assert that gifted children possess just the right amount of resilience to manage the strain rather than crumble under it.

Also, a significant correlation showed that hope is connected to seeking social assistance, emphasizing the role of support networks during coping.Hopeful students are more inclined to seek help from others, which might indicate that they are confident in their abilities to use social networking sites to find useful solutions. When students actively ask for help from their instructors, fellow students, or close family members, they can get helpful guidance and emotional support that can help students manage better (Wills et al., 2016). It has long been known that social support may help shield against stress.

It is noteworthy that less adaptive coping like self-blame, denial, or wishful thinking were not largely associated with hope. Higher levels of hope may deter students from participating in avoidance behaviors, according to the negative correlations between hope and these maladaptive coping methods, although these interactions were not significant enough to be statistically significant. This would suggest that although hope may not be as effective in discouraging maladaptive behaviors as it is in encouraging them. On the other hand, even with generally high levels of optimism, some students may yet participate in some degree of self-blame and wishful thinking, demonstrating the intricate and varied nature of coping (Skinner et al., 2003). It is interesting to note that hope and detachment are unrelated. Extrication is the detached, either maladaptive or adaptive reaction to stressful situations. It could psychologically desensitize individuals to unpleasant occurrences because, perhaps, there is calm in not caring, but the cruel fact is that many people respond to stressful circumstances with little or no action (Lazarus 1993).Detachment and hope do not exhibit a substantial correlation, indicating that hope is more likely to impact proactive, problem-focused coping mechanisms than passive avoidance behaviors.

The second hypothesis, which holds that hope is a substantial predictor of coping, was further validated by the regression analysis. It was discovered that hope significantly predicted problem-focused coping, accounting for 23.1% of the variation in this coping technique. This study brings out the importance of hope in getting students to take action and solve their challenges.

Moreover, hope was found to be a significant predictor of focusing on the positive (β =.441), accounting for 19.5% of the variance, highlighting

its significance in promoting an optimistic outlook in stressful circumstances. Hope also predicted, but with smaller percentages of explained variance, keeping to oneself (β =.196), reducing stress (β =.293), and seeking out social support (β =.200).

Although hope is important in helping children develop adaptive coping mechanisms, the other sub-variables lower predictive values imply that other factors could also have an impact on these coping mechanisms. For instance, personality traits, emotional regulation skills, and social network accessibility may all have an impact on the coping options available to students (Cheavens et al., 2006). All things considered, this study shows that hope is a strong predictor of adaptive coping strategies including problem-solving, preserving pleasant feelings, and enlisting the help of others. These results highlight the potential of hope-based therapies to improve students' coping skills, especially in stressful academic settings.

The results of this study have significant ramifications for academic institutions, mental health professionals, and legislators who seek to promote the psychological health of students. Interventions that cultivate hope may improve students' resilience and stressresiliency since hope is positively correlated with adaptive coping methods. The application of hope-based therapies, such as strength-based psychotherapy or cognitive behavioral treatment (CBT), may enhance students' capacity for figuring out solutions, emotional control, and psychological health in general. Exercises that promote hope can be incorporated into curricula or services for mental health offered by schools and colleges. Students' levels of hope may be raised by participating in programs that emphasize establishing goals, resolving issues, and positive reframing. This will ultimately result in improved coping mechanisms for both academic and personal difficulties. It would be advantageous for mental health professionals who collaborate with students to incorporate hope-enhancement strategies into their treatment plans.

Psychotherapies that support positive thinking may enable students to participate more actively in problem-centered coping techniques and other behavioral adaptations by encouraging agency and outlining paths to goal fulfillment. Educational policymakers need to understand how crucial psychological wellness is to students' long-term health and academic achievement. It is crucial to have policies that put student mental health first, particularly those that provide access to therapeutic services and initiatives that foster resilience. Policymakers may establish a more supportive climate that encourages better coping and lowers the likelihood of psychological discomfort or academic burnout by concentrating on strengthening psychological capacities like hope.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the association between coping methods and hope in students, specifically looking at whether hope is a predictor of adaptive coping techniques. The findings show a substantial correlation between hope and all forms of coping, including coping strategies centered around problems, keeping to oneself, looking for social assistance, and focusing on the good things in life. These means of coping were shown to be positively associated with hope, indicating that students who experience more hope are more likely to use adaptive coping mechanisms when confronted with difficulties. These results highlight the critical role that hope plays in helping students deal with stress and adversity by supporting the assumption that hope is both strongly connected to and predictive of good coping methods.

This study adds to the increasing corpus of research that highlights the role psychological concepts like hope play in promoting resilience and skillful coping. The strong relationships found between adaptive coping mechanisms and hope demonstrate the mental and behavioral advantages that hope offers under pressure. On the other hand, it appears that hope is more likely to motivate proactive and positive coping behaviors than aversion or detachment because there are no noteworthy correlations found between hope and unhealthy ways of coping (such as optimistic thinking, detached thinking, and blaming oneself).

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