Relationship of Stress Coping Strategies and Life Satisfaction among Students

Bahman Kord Tamini PhD*
Department of Psychology
University of Sistan and Baluchestan

Abdurahman Ansari[1]
Department of Psychology
University of Sistan and Baluchestan

The present study aims at examining the relationship between stress coping strategies and the life satisfaction of students. The sample size of this study consists of 205 students randomly selected from the science and art faculties of Sistan and Baluchestan University. The Stress Coping Strategies Inventory and the Student Life Satisfaction Scale were used to collect data. Results illustrated that life satisfaction significantly correlated with task focus and avoidance coping (p<0.01), but emotion focus had no significant correlation with life satisfaction. The results of the stepwise regression revealed that avoidance coping (p<0.001) was related to student life satisfaction and it accounted for 9.4% variance in the life satisfaction of students.

Keywords: stress coping strategies, life satisfaction

Human beings have many biological, psychological and social needs and desires. When these needs and desires are not satisfied they experience stress and tension. Besides these needs and desires, there are many challenges in human life and they all are likely to produce stress and tension. According to Selye (1978) Stress is any external event or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium. As pressure builds up, a person is said to be under stress when he/she runs out of resources to manage the said event or drive. If the amount of pressure

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becomes too great individuals may begin to show physical or psychological symptoms that can not only impede their work capabilities but also result in physical and or mental illness (Brown, Cooper and Kirkcaldy, 1996). Stress reactions vary according to the characteristics of the individual's personality, social support structure, life experiences, years of service, level of education, use of coping strategies, the intensity of the stressful situation and any unique feature of the organization (Rakshase, 2009).

Coping resources refer to attempts to meet environmental demands in order to prevent negative consequences. Coping strategies can be grouped into two main types, i.e., problem focused coping and emotion focused coping. The first main approach includes any strategy to deal directly with the stressor through overt action or through realistic mental problem solving activities. In the second approach, we do not look for ways of changing the stressful situation; instead we try to change our feelings and thoughts about it. This strategy is called emotion regulation (Zimbardo, 1988; Rakshase, 2009). According to Osipow and Spokane (1998), the following personal coping resources are used: recreation, self-care, social support, rational coping and personal strain. The following aspects are included in personal strain: vocational strain, psychological strain, interpersonal strain and physical strain (Rakshase, 2009).

Today the world is changing and these changes have positive and negative effects on the individual's life; hence, some of these effects promote the well-being and life satisfaction of the individual but sometimes these issues can reduce the individual's mental health. Likewise, coping with these changes is a significant challenge. Some researchers have suggested that life satisfaction and well-being must be taken into account. While others have placed satisfaction in the field of the social sciences (Farooqi & Tamini, 2010). Life satisfaction was conceptualized as a key indicator of well being. In judging life satisfaction, individuals set a standard which they perceived as appropriate

for the circumstances of their lives (Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffin, 1985). It may be possible that a person is satisfied with almost all domains (e.g., health, wealth, marriage, education etc.) of his/her life but may still be dissatisfied with a particular domain which he/she weighs as most important and dissatisfaction with this particular domain may negatively affect his/her overall judgment of life satisfaction. Health has been recognized as one of the most important factors related to life satisfaction (Dubey, 2003). Pavot, Diener & Suh (1998) suggest that terms of life satisfaction focuses on the past, present and future levels of global life satisfaction. Positive thinking about the future has important implications for how well a person might cope with his conflicting conditions. Future orientation predicts significant positive variance in the present as well as future satisfaction with life (Dubey & Agarwal, 2004). In some researches an attempt have been made to identify effective coping strategies which lead to satisfaction with different temporal aspects of life even when one is afflicted with a chronic disease. Mayer and Diener (1995) refuted the idea that satisfaction is less a matter of getting what you want than wanting what you have. For example, after a period of adoption (about 3 months) even people who have experienced serious life events again report near baseline levels of well being (Suh, Deiner & Fujita, 1996).

Some of the researchers around the world have examined the relationship between the stress coping strategies and life satisfaction of students and results illustrated that stress coping strategies have affected life satisfaction. In a study Dubey and Agarwal (2007) showed that the use of active coping strategies was effective in promoting the level of satisfaction as a whole and that these strategies even affected present and future satisfaction with life. Matheny, Curlette, Aysan, Herrington, Froerer, Thompson, & Hamarat (2004) compared the perceived stress, life satisfaction, and coping resources of American and Turkish students; results did not differ significantly in regard to perceived stress, life satisfaction, or an overall measure of coping resources. However, they did

differ significantly regarding specific coping resources. Variables entering regression models for predicting life satisfaction differed for students in the two countries and for the sexes within those countries, and these models accounted for between 30% and 62% of variance. Social support and a sense of financial freedom were particularly useful in predicting life satisfaction. Coping resources accounted for 54% of variance in perceived stress. There were significant sex differences for both countries, generally favoring males, in regard to specific coping resources. Kousha and Mohseni (2000) investigated (1) how satisfied and happy Iranians are, (2) what factors determine their happiness, and (3) whether those factors are the same as those that determine their happiness among Americans. It was found that at the macro level, Iranians are not a very happy people. Furthermore, the level of their happiness reflects the social and economic status of most developing societies. Demographic variables that did not have much effect on one's happiness are the same in both societies, however, the degree of their importance was significant. Sam (2001) examined self reported satisfaction with life. On the whole, students reported good satisfaction with life. However, students from Europe and North America were on the whole more satisfied in comparison with their counterparts from Africa and Asia. It was also found that factors such as the number of friends, satisfaction with finances, perceived discrimination and information received prior to the foreign sojourn significantly affected the student's life satisfaction. Tamini and Mohammadyfar (2009) compared the mental health and life satisfaction of Iranian and Indian students and results illustrated that Indian students were significantly more satisfied than their Iranian counterparts. Farooqi and Tamini (2010) demonstrated that female students obtained significantly higher mean scores than male students on the life satisfaction scale.

The results of different studies revealed that coping stress strategies affect life satisfaction. Therefore, the present study aims to find the relationship between life satisfaction and stress coping strategies students

of Sistan & Baluchestan University. Furthermore, the present study attempts to provide answers to the below question:

Is there any significant relationship between life satisfaction and types of stress coping strategies in science and art students?

Method

Sample

To select the adequate sample for the present study 205 students from the science faculty (54 males and 49 females) and the art faculty (49 males and 53 females) of Sistan and Baluchestan University were selected at random.

Procedure: for data collection one permission letter was given by the Psychology Department of the University of Sistan & Baluchestan, and the respondents were asked to fill the questionnaires.

Instruments

Stress coping strategies. This inventory was developed by Endler & Parker (1990a). This inventory (48 items, using 5-point Likert scales) measures three main coping strategies: task focused, dealing with the problem at hand; emotion focused, concentrating on the resultant emotions (e.g., becoming angry or upset); and avoidance coping, trying to avoid the problem. There are 16 items under each coping strategy. Avoidance coping can be divided further into two types: an 8-item Distraction subscale and a 5-item Social Diversion subscale. This inventory has very good Cronbach's alpha values, .91, .89 and .85, respectively for Task, Emotional and Avoidance-oriented styles. The overall Cronbach's alpha was .91.

Life satisfaction scale. This scale was developed by Huebner (1994) in order to identify student life satisfaction. Internal consistency (alpha) coefficients have been reported in various publications (Greenspoon & Saklofske, 1997; Huebner, 1994; Huebner, Laughlin, Ash, and Gilman, 1998). The findings suggest that the reliabilities all range from .70s to low .90s; thus, they are acceptable for research purposes. Test-retest coefficients for two- and four-week time periods have also been reported (Huebner, 1997) falling mostly in the .70 to .90 range, providing further support for the reliability of the scale. Tamini and Mohammadyfar (2009) showed that the overall Cronbach's Alpha was.7577.

Results

To respond to the first question of the research the Pearson correlation coefficient and stepwise regression was applied and results are given in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1
Pearson Correlation Coefficiens between Stress Coping Strategies and Life Satisfaction of Students (n=205)

Variable	Life Satisfaction	Task Focused	Emotion Focused	Avoidance Coping
Life Satisfaction	1			
Task Focused	.227[**]	1		
Emotion Focused	.129	.552[**]	1	
Avoidance Coping	.306[**]	.536[**]	.552[**]	1

**p< .01

The results of Table 1 show that a significant positive correlation was found between life satisfaction and task focused style (r=.227, p< .01), and also life satisfaction had a significant correlation with avoidance coping

(r=.306, p< .01), but life satisfaction did not have any significant correlation with emotion focused style.

Table 2
Stepwise Regression on Life Satisfaction

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	R	R^2
Avoidance Coping	.167	.036	.306***	4.583	.306	.094

***p< .001

As shown in Table 2, avoidance coping (Beta=.306, p< .001) was related to student life satisfaction. Other dimensions of stress coping strategies (task focused and emotion focused) failed to enter into the regression equation which shows that they were not significantly associated with life satisfaction. Avoidance coping accounted for 9.4% of the variance in the life satisfaction of students.

Discussion

The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient indicated that life satisfaction significantly correlated with task focused style, and also life satisfaction had a significant correlation with avoidance coping, but life satisfaction did not have any significant correlation with emotion focused style. The results of the present study are in conformity with the research of Dubey and Agarwal (2007) and Matheny et al. (2004). Stress coping strategies increase life satisfaction and if students apply effective coping strategies to stress their life satisfaction will increase and vice versa if stress coping strategies are weak a student's life will be vulnerable and the student might experience some neurotic and mental disorders.

The results of stepwise regression illustrated that avoidance coping was related to student life satisfaction. Other dimensions of stress coping

strategies (task focused and emotion focused) failed to enter into the regression equation, which shows that they were not significantly associated with life satisfaction. Avoidance coping accounted for a 9.4% variance in the life satisfaction of students. The results of this study are in conformity with the research of Dubey and Agarwal (2007). Avoidance coping is a predictor of student life satisfaction while task focused style and emotion focused style are not. In an indigenous culture like Baluchestan society (Iran) society emphasizes   the use of the avoidance coping style and people of this region do not want to effectively solve their problems through the task focused style. Thus, their satisfaction with life derives from this type of stress coping.

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