

# NAVIGATING ACADEMIC SUCCESS: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF STRESS COPING STRATEGIES ON ADOLESCENT MALE STUDENTS IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

*The objective of this research was to assess the impact of various coping strategies on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students. The sample consists of one hundred class XII male senior secondary school students. Jaipur, the capital city of Rajasthan, was the study area. The assessment of coping strategies in the chosen participants was conducted using the Coping Strategies Scale, which was developed by Srivastava in 2001. The evaluation of coping strategies in this study includes five distinct approaches: behavioural approach, cognitive approach, cognitive-behavioural approach, behavioural avoidance, and cognitive avoidance. The academic achievement of male adolescents in class XII was assessed based on their academic achievements in the preceding year. The correlation between coping strategies and academic achievement was found to be significant and positive in the context of behavioural, cognitive, and cognitive behavioural approaches. In contrast, the relationship between behaviour avoidance and cognitive avoidance coping strategies and academic achievement was significant but negative. The study concluded that stress coping strategies, particularly the behavioural, cognitive, and cognitive behavioural approaches, prove to be more effective in enhancing the academic achievement of adolescent male class XII students compared to the behavioural and cognitive avoidance coping strategies.*

**Keywords:** Academic achievement, Adolescent, Class 12, Coping Strategies

## I. INTRODUCTION

Most school-aged students experience academic stress, which is acceptable as long as it remains within manageable limits. When students are overstressed and anxious, the situation becomes complicated. The lack of concentration on academics is a result of this. Stress leads to a lack of motivation to complete academic work to the best of one's ability.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed that an individual experiences stress when they cannot effectively manage a perceived threat and corresponding situation. To manage stress, an individual may react to or avoid a stressful situation (Jones, 1990). The condition arises when an individual is unable to handle extremely challenging situations, leading to a particular mental state. Furthermore, apart from psychological concerns like fluctuations in mood or feelings of sadness, this stress also induces notable physiological alterations in the human body, including an accelerated heart rate and heightened muscular activity. People utilize various coping mechanisms to effectively deal with stress. Coping is a sincere effort to eliminate obstacles that cause stress. Lazarus and Folkman

(1984) included cognitive and behavioural factors in coping with stress-causing internal and external circumstances. Compos et al. (2001) defined coping as problem- and emotion-focused coping. The problem-focused coping strategy entails collecting minute details about stressful situations and then employing problem-solving skills to manage the stressful condition. Individuals utilize problem-focused coping when they believe they can manage the stress caused by a specific stressor with the available resources. A coping strategy focusing on emotions entails avoiding a stressful environment in the present and hoping it will resolve in time. Cognitive and behavioural therapy can reduce tension, negativity, and mood swings by modifying one's behaviour. This coping strategy focuses primarily on self-monitoring, decision-making, cognitive restructuring, and goal-setting. In contrast, researchers consider avoidance coping as maladaptive due to the individual's failure to learn from previous mistakes and their unwillingness to accept advice from others. Similarly, in cognitive avoidance, a person attempts to escape a stressful situation by distracting himself with irrelevant thoughts.

Academic concerns are the primary source of stress for students. Academic pressure is a significant source of stress, including examinations, report writing, and class attendance. Academic achievement in India is unique in students' lives because their futures depend on it. Hence, it is imperative to comprehend the impact of different coping strategies on the academic achievement of male adolescents in class XII.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### A. Definition of stress management techniques:

Stress coping strategies pertain to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral techniques that individuals utilize in order to effectively handle and adjust to stressors present in their surroundings. People use various methods and techniques described in this article to manage their emotional reactions, reduce their perceived stress levels, and regain a sense of equilibrium and overall wellness. There are different coping strategies available, including problem-focused coping, which entails actively dealing with the stressor, and emotion-focused coping, which centers on managing the emotional distress linked to the stressor. The selection and efficacy of coping strategies can differ depending on individual traits, situational elements, and the specific stressor's characteristics.

### B. Theoretical frameworks for stress management:

Researchers have developed numerous theoretical frameworks to comprehend and illuminate stress-coping processes. These frameworks provide valuable insights into the fundamental mechanisms and processes involved in how individuals cope with stressors. The domain of stress coping consists of two extensively acknowledged theoretical frameworks: the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which was established by Lazarus and Folkman in 1984, and the Dual-Process Model of Coping with Bereavement, which was introduced by Stroebe and Schut in 1999.

According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, stress is a dynamic process that encompasses the evaluation of stressors and the evaluation of coping resources and strategies. According to this particular model, people participate in a cognitive assessment process that encompasses primary evaluation (the assessment of the stressor's importance and interpretation) and secondary evaluation (the evaluation of accessible coping resources and potential strategies). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), their model emphasizes the significance of an individual's perceptions and beliefs in determining their responses to stress and coping strategies.

The Dual-Process Model of Coping with Bereavement is a theoretical framework that discusses strategies for dealing with the emotional and psychological difficulties associated with the loss of a loved one. The proposed model introduces two distinct processes: coping strategies geared toward minimizing losses and coping strategies geared toward fostering restoration. Loss-oriented coping is a technique designed to manage and express sadness effectively. Restoration-oriented coping, on the other hand, entails implementing methods specifically designed to address the practical and psychosocial challenges resulting from experiencing a loss. According to Stroebe and Schut (1999), the proposed model suggests that individuals alternate between these two coping mechanisms during the grieving process. The goal is to integrate the loss into their lives while adjusting to a new and different reality.

### ***C. The correlation between adolescents' stress levels and their academic achievement:***

#### **1. Effect of stress on academic achievement:**

Multiple studies have shown that stress can significantly impact academic achievement, especially among adolescents. Elevated stress levels may negatively impact multiple aspects of academic achievement. Several significant findings concerning the effect of stress on academic achievement include:

- a. A decline in academic achievement: Research shows a correlation between high-stress levels and poor academic achievement and classes among the student population (Hill & Tyson, 2009; McEwen, 2007). Chronic or prolonged stress exposure can disrupt cognitive functioning, attention, and memory, making it more difficult for students to concentrate, retain information, and achieve academic success (Elfering et al., 2017; Lupien et al., 2009).
- b. Disrupted motivation and engagement: According to Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2006), elevated stress levels can lead to decreased motivation and disconnection from academic assignments and endeavours. According to Skinner and Pitzer (2012), stressors can reduce a person's sense of self-efficacy, heighten feelings of helplessness, and diminish interest in academic pursuits. Due to this, studying and actively engaging in learning may be less likely to occur.
- c. Increased susceptibility to mental health issues: The potential impact of chronic stress on mental health, including anxiety and depression, is a factor that can hinder academic achievement. Mental health issues can disrupt students' concentration, motivation, and general well-being, impeding their ability to achieve optimal academic achievement.

#### **2. Factors that influence adolescent males' stress levels:**

The stress levels of adolescent males can be affected by various factors, which can affect their academic achievement. The following factors can be taken into consideration:

- a. Academic pressure: The potential influence of parental expectations, teacher demands, and the educational system's rigorous standards on adolescent males' heightened stress levels has been recognized as a factor that may contribute to the pressure to achieve academic achievement.
- b. Interpersonal connections: According to Eisenberg et al. (1999), peer relationships, social acceptance, and bullying or social conflicts can significantly impact male adolescents' stress levels and academic achievement.
- c. Family dynamics: The stress levels of adolescent males can be affected by various familial factors, such as parenting styles, family support, and familial stressors (Conger et al., 1992; Lengua et al., 2000).

- d. Sociocultural context: Cultural expectations, societal norms, and gender roles can influence the stress experienced by male adolescents. These variables may also affect their coping strategies and academic achievement (Chen et al., 2015; Chuang et al., 2014).

#### **D. Coping mechanisms among male adolescents**

##### **1. Various forms of coping strategies encompass:**

- a. Problem-specific coping: Problem-focused coping strategies refer to effectively directing actions and efforts towards addressing the stressor or problem. Those who utilize this problem-solving method concentrate on putting into action practical steps to address the problem or minimize its impact. Problem-focused coping includes information-gathering, plan-making, problem-solving, and instrumental support-seeking. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2016) identified these strategies.
- b. Emotionally-focused coping: Emotionally-focused coping strategies include the regulation and management of stress-related emotional distress. Instead of directly confronting the source of stress, individuals prioritize managing their emotional response. Seeking emotional support from others, engaging in relaxation techniques, diverting activities, or using positive reappraisal to reframe the situation may be involved (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Skinner & Zimmer-Hembeck, 2016).
- c. Avoidant coping: Avoidant coping uses techniques to avoid or evade the stressor or the resulting emotional distress it causes. The potential responses to the stressor include denying, avoiding, or repressing the associated thoughts and emotions. Carver et al. (1989) and Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck (2016) widely acknowledge that although avoidant coping strategies may provide momentary relief, they are less beneficial.
- d. Seeking social support: Seeking social support involves reaching out to others to receive assistance, empathy, or direction. Counselling, engaging in conversations with friends or family members, and active participation in support communities are all potential strategies for obtaining guidance and assistance. According to Cohen and Wills (1985) and Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2016), social support is vital for stress management because it provides emotional reassurance, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging.

##### **2. Gender disparities in coping strategies**

According to previous studies, it has been found that there may be variations in the coping mechanisms utilized by individuals of varying genders when faced with stressful circumstances. Although it is important to acknowledge that these variations are not universally applicable and can differ from individual to individual, numerous studies have indicated the subsequent patterns:

- a. Problem-specific coping: Problem-focused coping is the utilization of practical approaches to directly address and eradicate the root cause of stress. According to several studies, males exhibit a greater propensity for problem-focused coping strategies than females (Matud, 2004; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2016; among others). According to research, males exhibit a greater propensity for participating in proactive problem-solving activities and implementing measures to address the problem or mitigate its consequences.
- b. Emotionally-focused coping: Emotionally-focused coping strategies include the effective management of stress-related emotional distress. Based on various research

studies (Matud, 2004; Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2016), it has been found that females tend to employ emotion-focused coping strategies at a higher rate compared to males. Researchers have observed that females express their emotions openly, seek help from their social networks, and engage in various activities to alleviate emotional distress.

### ***E. Identification of research gaps and justification for carrying out the study:***

While previous studies have investigated the impact of stress management strategies on the academic achievements of teenagers, there are still several aspects that require further investigation. Researchers need to address the following research gaps sufficiently.

1. Limited emphasis on male adolescents: Previous research on stress management techniques and their effect on academic achievement has primarily focused on the entire adolescent population or included both genders but failed to investigate potential gender differences (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2016). It is essential to investigate adolescent males' unique experiences and coping mechanisms, as they may encounter unique sources of stress and exhibit various coping mechanisms. Understanding the unique challenges adolescent males face and the strategies they employ to overcome these obstacles can facilitate the development of interventions to enhance their academic achievement.
2. Insufficient examination of stress management techniques in senior secondary institutions: Although there have been numerous studies on stress and coping among adolescents in various educational settings, there needs to be more research examining stress-coping strategies in the context of senior secondary school. Senior secondary schools play a significant role in the educational process due to their importance in higher academic standards, comprehensive exam preparation, and strategic career planning. Analyzing stress management methods in this educational environment can provide valuable observations regarding the distinct difficulties encountered by adolescents males and aid in the creation of interventions specifically catered to this phase of growth.
3. Limited examination of the association between stress coping strategies and academic achievement: While there have been previous studies on the impact of stress-coping techniques on academic achievement, further research is needed to fully comprehend the specific mechanisms through which these strategies influence educational results. Skinner and Zimmer-Heimbeck (2016) suggest that conducting an in-depth analysis of intermediary factors, such as motivation, engagement, and resilience, can help gain a comprehensive understanding of how stress management techniques affect academic achievement. This information could improve interventions and support strategies for adolescent males to improve their academic achievement.

## **III. OBJECTIVE**

This study aimed to evaluate the academic achievement of male students in class XII based on their coping strategies.

## **IV. HYPOTHESIS**

Hypothesized that male students in class XII would demonstrate a significant relationship with the coping strategies, namely behavioural approach, cognitive approach, cognitive-behavioural approach, behavioural avoidance, and cognitive avoidance.

## **V. METHODOLOGY**



The present study was conducted utilizing the subsequent methodological procedures.

### A. Sample:

One hundred male students from class XII at senior secondary schools in Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan, were chosen to conduct the study. Both government and private educational institutions selected students. The researchers employed a sampling strategy for the selection of subjects.

### B. Tool

#### 1. CopingStrategyScale:

The evaluation of coping strategies among male class XII secondary school seniors was conducted using the Coping Strategies Scale, which was developed by Srivastava in 2001. The scale consists of 15 items that assess behavioural approach, 6 items that assess cognitive approach, 8 items that assess cognitive behavioural approach, 14 items that assess behavioural avoidance, and 7 items that assess cognitive avoidance. The scale demonstrates a high level of reliability, as evidenced by its test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.92. This scale also possesses a high level of content and concurrent validity. We base the scoring for each item on a five-point scale: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Frequently, and Almost Always. We assign the values 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 on this five-point scale. High scores on the behavioural, cognitive, and cognitive behavioural approaches indicate effective coping, whereas high scores on the behavioural avoidance and cognitive avoidance subscales indicate ineffective coping.

#### 2. AcademicAchievement:

The marks earned in class XI were considered an academic achievements for certain subjects enrolled in class XII.

### C. Procedure

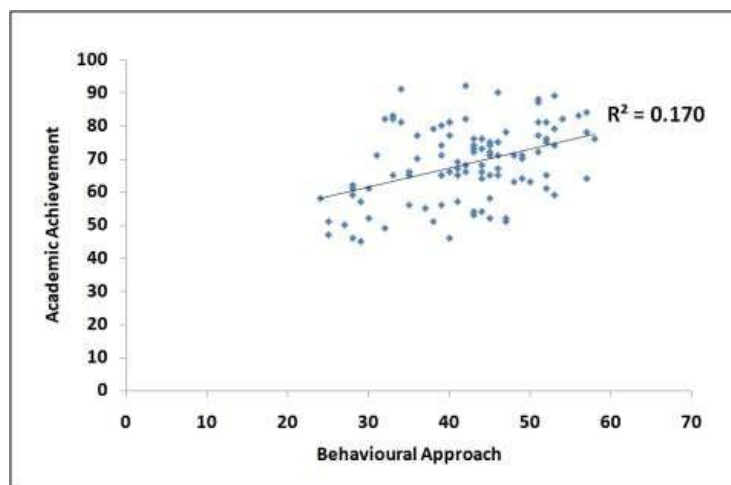
- One hundred male Class XII senior secondary school students were chosen from Jaipur.
- The Srivastava (2001) Coping Strategies Scale was administered and scored according to the authors' manual. The office approved the recording of the class XI marks. We used appropriate statistics for data analysis.

## VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Value of Correlation (r) between Stress Coping Strategies and Academic Achievement of Adolescent Senior Secondary Students (N=100)**

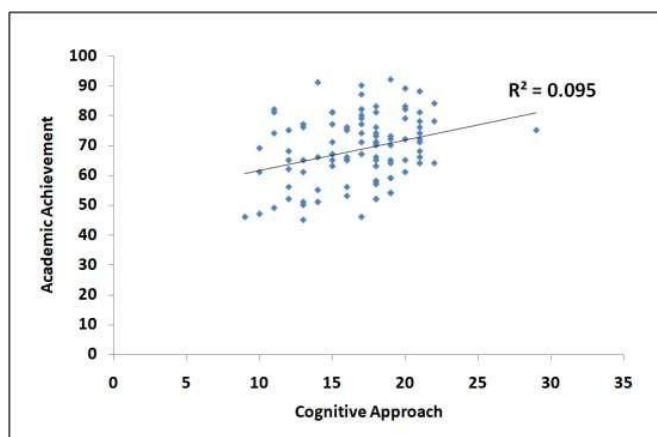
Coping Strategies	Academic Achievement	
Behavioural Approach	'r'	.413**
Cognitive Approach	'r'	.309**
Cognitive Behavioural Approach	'r'	.200**
Behavioural Avoidance	'r'	-.314**
Cognitive Avoidance	'r'	-.355**

\*\*Significant at .01 level; r(df=98) = 0.19 at .05 level; 0.25 at .01 level



*Figure1: Coefficient of Determination Between Behavioural Approach and Academic Achievement of Adolescent Senior Secondary Students*

Examining Table 1 reveals a positive and statistically significant relationship between the behavioural approach coping strategy and the academic achievement of male adolescents in senior secondary school. We found that  $r = 0.413$  was statistically significant at the .01 level. Figure 1 also revealed that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) between these two variables is 0.17, indicating that the behavioural approach coping strategy explains 17% of the variance in the academic achievement of secondary school seniors.



*Figure2: Coefficient of Determination between Cognitive Approach and Academic Achievement of Adolescent Senior Secondary Students*

Upon examining Table 1, it becomes evident that there exists a noteworthy and statistically significant correlation between the employment of cognitive approach coping strategy and the academic achievement of male adolescents in senior secondary school. We found that  $r = 0.309$  was statistically significant at the .01 level. Figure 2 also reveals that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) between these two variables is 0.095, indicating that the cognitive approach coping strategy explains 9.5% of the variance in the academic achievement of secondary school seniors.

A review of Table 1 reveals a positive and statistically significant relationship between the cognitive behavioural approach coping strategy and the academic achievement of male senior secondary school adolescents. At the .01 significance level,  $r = .200$  was found to be statistically significant. According to Figure 3, it can be observed that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ )

between the two variables was 0.039. This suggests that the cognitive behavioural approach coping strategy explained approximately 3.9% of the variation in the academic achievement of secondary school seniors.

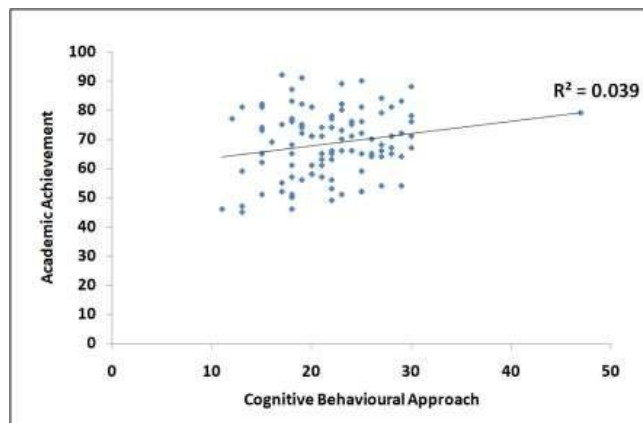


Figure3: Coefficient of Determination Between Cognitive Behavioural Approach and Academic Achievement of Adolescent Senior Secondary Students

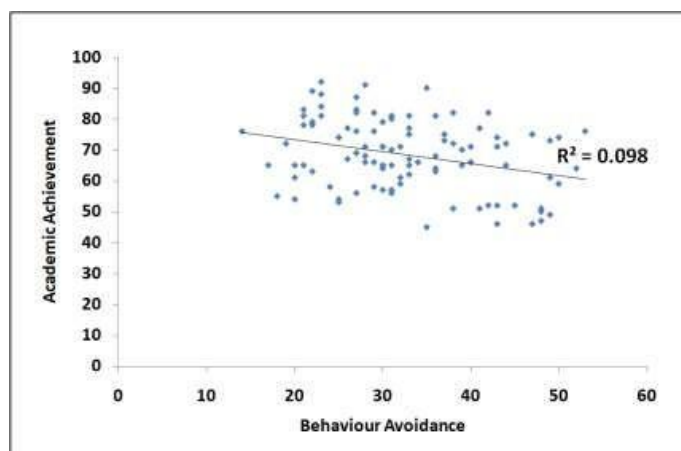


Figure4: Coefficient of Determination between Behavioural Avoidance and Academic Achievement of Adolescent Senior Secondary Students

Examining Table 1 reveals a negative but statistically significant relationship between the behaviour avoidance coping strategy and the academic achievement of male adolescents in senior secondary school. We found that  $r = -0.314$  was statistically significant at the .01 level. Figure 4 also reveals that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) between these two variables is 0.098, indicating that the behaviour avoidance coping strategy explains 9.8% of the variance in academic achievement among secondary school seniors.



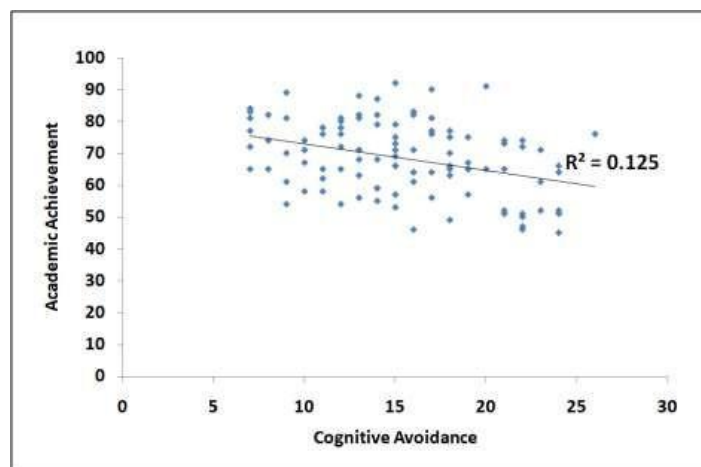


Figure5: Coefficient of Determination between Cognitive Avoidance and Academic Achievement of Adolescent SeniorSecondary Students

A review of Table 1 reveals a negative but statistically significant relationship between the cognitive avoidance coping strategy and the academic achievement of male adolescents in senior secondary school. We found that  $r = -0.355$  was statistically significant at the .01 level. Figure 5 also reveals that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) between these two variables is 0.125, indicating that the cognitive avoidance coping strategy explains 12.5% of the variance in academic achievement among secondary school seniors.

#### A. Discussion

The findings of this research suggest that the enhancement of academic achievement among male secondary school seniors can be attributed to the utilization of coping strategies, including the behavioural approach, cognitive approach, and cognitive-behavioural approach. On the other hand, academic achievement is diminished by coping strategies like behavioral avoidance and cognitive avoidance. The outcomes are unsurprising as behavioural, cognitive, and cognitive-behavioural methods for managing stress directly address stress-inducing factors through problem-solving techniques, which are focused on addressing the problem at hand. In problem-focused strategies, an individual eliminates the stressful environment or factor through active coping. In contrast, avoidance coping attempts to avoid stressful situations without addressing their root causes. Therefore, male senior secondary school students with a greater propensity for problem-focused coping have higher academic achievement than those with a greater propensity for avoidance coping.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the behavioural, cognitive, and cognitive behavioural approaches are significantly more effective than avoidance coping strategies in enhancing the academic achievement of male adolescent senior secondary school students. It is also possible to conclude that students should be encouraged to utilize problem-focused coping strategies for stress management and improved academic achievement.

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