

AWARENESS ABOUT USING THE COPING STRATEGIES AMONG THE GOMAL UNIVERSITY TEACHING STAFF

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the awareness about using the coping strategies among teaching staff in Gomal University. It covers a multidimensional approach and emphasizes all the related aspects of giving the basic conceptual framework the phenomena of teaching stress, its negative effect causing health problems and the attitude of job burnout are discussed deeply. To highlight the role of strong coping mechanism a number of coping strategies are elaborated in detail to suggest the various ways to control the teaching stress and minimize the chances of burn out. The study follows an organized sequence following the schematic diagram and model developed by the researchers. Researchers designed a set for the study in pertinent to the research methods of data collection, statistical analysis and interpretation. The study includes a randomly selected sample of 250 university teachers including 210 male and 40 female teachers employed in various teaching departments of Gomal University. Research hypotheses are tested and a summary of major findings is provided.

Keywords: Coping Strategies, job burnout, teaching stress

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines include complete descriptions of the fonts, spacing, and related information. A large variety of research had been conducted on stress prevention and stress management. It was mostly in the areas of health and human dealing services. Current research about stress was more and more goal oriented. It emphasized the need for problem solving techniques and programs. There were certain strategies which the experts regarded as successful in coping with stress and burnout. Teachers and educationists found them very helpful and practicable. Different organizations had introduced stress management programs including the coping strategies and the workers could join these programs at the workplace.

Coping depended on the availability of certain resources. A successful coping might involve financial, social and technical support. Coping resources were required to cope with a situation. Sometimes they were readily available with the person. The person might have money to consult a psychiatrist or purchase certain exercise machines etc. He/she might have a supportive family, friends or colleagues ready to provide an instant help. But sometimes the teacher had to find out and seek resources required to solve the problem which was by itself an additional problem. A person already at the peak of gloom and despair could not easily make the resources available at his disposal. Coping resources were the factors required to utilize coping to moderate the level of stress. Coping resources comprised two major types.

1. Personal resources
2. Environmental resources

Personal Resources: It included physical potential including the person's overall health and energy level. Health was an important factor in stress reduction. It was true that certain

people had achieved much despite their poor health. Health could facilitate the coping efforts. It was comparatively easy to cope with stress when a person was physically fit and mentally sound.

Psychological resources comprised all the internal and external attributes which helped a person to look peaceful and feel positive despite the adverse circumstances in which he/she was surviving. Having a positive behavior towards the problems of life provided the strength to kick out all the stresses of life. Competency resources included both the problem solving techniques and application of social strategies and skills.

Facing a new challenge could create personal stress. One needed to deal with minor and major crises of life. The person might get puzzled dealing with a sudden change. Experts advised to seek as much information about a problem as possible. This could enable one to know that certain other people had also faced similar type of situation and one could meet with them to find out how successfully they managed to cope.

One could neutrally analyze one's own situation from every angle and try to solve it rationally. One must keep in mind that there was a solution for every problem. There was always a way where there was a will. It was the will power which helped people in solving their problems. Social skills comprised the communication skill, the conflict resolution skill, and stress and time management skills. Social skills facilitated problem solving with contacting and seeking the cooperation by one's social circle.

The Environmental Resources: It consisted of both the social support and the material resources. Social support was a kind of help and assistance which provided a moral support and other possible help and guidance to solve the problem. Material resources were financial resources plus any required material which needed to be purchased with the help of money. It was quite true that money was not the adequate solution of all human stress. Sometimes very rich people died of a sudden shock resulting from an unbearable stress. But poverty and money shortage was by itself a very big hurt and stress for majority of the population. Poverty in the midst of plenty was a big stressor of human life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Folkman and Lazarus (1984) defined coping as a combination of all the cognitive and behavioral efforts to develop a self-control against stress. Matheny (1986) defined coping as any conscious or unconscious effort to prevent and overcome the sources of stress or to enable oneself to create tolerance to bear the unwanted happenings in life. Coping could be learnt with or without planning and its purpose was to avoid or minimize any possible harm of a painful experience of life.

Awareness about any problem could be the first step towards finding its solution. Brunce and West (1996) found that the success of an intervention program depended on the fact that the participants had built a knowledge and awareness about stress and burnout. The awareness sessions could be started in an environment free from any kind of pressure or authority control so that the participants argued and discussed their problems freely.

Forman (1981) propounded a suggestion that during these participatory sessions a psychologist could explain the latest developments in the definition and causes of stress in schools, the frequency and effects of stress both on students and teachers in a stressful educational environment. Awareness about the following points enabled a teacher to identify his/her level of stress and to know how deep rooted was the problem.

1. To identify the stressful work events and the resulting thoughts produced in teacher's mind.
2. To recognize the effects on teachers mind and body.
3. To understand the fact that the resulting physical and mental reactions were due to stress and they might harm the teacher's well-being.
4. Try to change the way of thinking, to rebuild teacher's self-image and self-esteem.
5. To become determined in mind to win the war against stress to become successful in teaching profession.

When the employees became well aware about their stress problem its causes and consequences it was feasible for the employers to provide them guidance and counseling to minimize their difficulties at work.

Landsbergis and Vivona-Vaughan (1995) conducted an experimental research study to prepare and introduce an effective intervention program for stress management and reached at the following three phase solution and this was necessary to find out a practical solution by a participatory effort program of all the stake holders.

- I. During phase 1 the teachers and management could hold a combined meeting to discuss freely all the stress related issues existing in a particular educational institution.
- II. Phase 2 involved the preparation of specific goals to solve the problem.
- III. During phase 3 an effective strategy to achieve the enlisted goals could be adopted.

It was very important to bring a positive change in one's own way of thinking. If a teacher was able to replace all his negative beliefs and self-defeating, self-weakening ideas and developed a constructive, realistic mind set he/she was able to develop a better self-control. Identifying the hardships and difficulties which could be encountered within an educational environment enabled the teacher to face them rationally. The teacher could also be able to devise a plan in anticipation and became mentally prepare to bear the risk of all possible stress at school.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explained the details of coping process having three major components. First component was the observation and evaluation of what the person under stress actually did or felt about his problem of stress. Second, his feelings and experience was examined within a specified context. Coping mechanism was directed towards particular conditions to find out the fact that up to what extent a person under stress was able to cope with stress.

Third component of coping was actually a shifting process during which a person relied mostly on a particular form of coping, i.e. defensive strategies, and adopted the problem solving strategies with a change in person environment relationship. Therefore it was a dynamic and not a constant process. The coping techniques and programs needed to be changed with a change in the situation faced by a stressed person. It was a process of appraisal and reappraisal and required a great deal of flexibility and innovation.

Effective coping strategies could perform many beneficial functions for the human beings. Their primary function was to reduce the unnecessary stress and rehabilitate the equilibrium state of mind and body. Their impacts on professional life were far reaching. White (1974) mentioned three main function of coping which were further elaborated and explained by other researchers working on coping mechanism.

- a. Securing information related to the situation.

- b. Maintaining satisfactory balance to take an appropriate action on the basis of information collected.
- c. Exercising a complete freedom of decision making.

Matud (2004) expressed about the two main coping styles the cognitive and behavioral and the combination helped to adjust with or to remove the stressor.

Day and Livingstone (2003) suggested that women use more frequently the emotion-focused coping while men used generally the problem-focused coping. Sorenson & Torbjorn(2004) suggested that this could be a reason behind why women tended to perceive more stress in their lives, as well as having more problems with anxiety and depression than men.

Mariana K. et al (2012) conducted a study over 271 participants comprising 138 male and 133 female soccer players. The findings suggested that both the males and females differ in their preference and choice while using strategies for stress management and the gender role was a moderating factor in the styles of stress appraisal and coping strategies.

Day and Livingstone (2003) also found a difference in styles of coping and Matud (2004) supported the existence of gender differences in both perception and coping of stress. Hamilton and Fagot (1995) opposed the idea of existence of any kind of gender difference in teaching stress Effective coping proved successful in stress reduction with its far reaching impacts and results i.e.

1. Increased resiliency for stress
2. Improved performance
3. Low rate of absenteeism
4. Increased interest in life and work
5. Improved health
6. A stress free and relaxed life

Extracted Variables

The analysis of existing literature led to the extraction and development of variables pertinent to the present study requirements and purposes. Such variables include the demographic variables about the teachers forming the sampling population of this study. The other variables cover the various dimensions of teaching stress. The following table gives the details of the defined variables of this study.

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Elements/Attributes</i>
1	Demographic & biographic Information	Identification (Optional), gender, age, marital status, Job status, residential status, Qualifications, experience, designation, Income, administrative duties.
2	Level of prevalence of stress	Self-reported/self-diagnosed perception of stress varying from no stress to mild, moderate, high and extreme level The dependent variable forming the basic theme around which this entire study revolves.
3	Coping Strategies	Application of Stress Management techniques
3.1	Religious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayers • Dua'a • Recitation from the Holy Quran

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zikir • Going to Mosque • Charity/Sadaqaat • Meditation
3.2	Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from family member • Support from friends • Support from colleague teachers • Advice from a Psychiatrist • Join a club
3.3	Behavioral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management • Reading and writing • Work hard • Internet • Television • Music • Excessive Sleep • Smoking • Shouting and Quarreling • Overeating • Binging
3.4	Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think Positive • Accepting the challenge • Humorous Jokes • More confident • Imagining happy life events and past memories • Using Problem solving skills • To Remind and Console Oneself that it is going to be over
3.5	Defensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deny and Ignore • Avoid • Face and Fight • Rationalize • Suppress • Develop a strong and Hardy Personality against Stress
3.6	Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxation • Walking • Running and Jogging

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- Playing Indoor and Outdoor games
 - Swimming
 - Yoga and Aerobics
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HYPOTHESES

H₀₁ = There is no awareness and usage about the coping strategies among the Gomal University teachers.

H₀₂= There is no gender difference in the awareness and usage of coping strategies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Current research study was conducted in the teaching departments split between the city campus and new campus of Gomal University both having a distance of 9 kilometers apart from each other. The University was founded in 1974 with a few departments and affiliated colleges. Now it is a mature, full-fledged University. With the passage of time it has gained a good image and is ranked in top ten Universities of Pakistan. Its department of Pharmacy and IT education has achieved an international reputation. Currently it is offering a wide range of subjects and advanced programs of study by the qualified Teachers.

Population of the Study

Pretorius (1995) defined a population as the aggregate of individuals or total number of objects which forms the subject matter of the research whereas the sample is the minor part drawn from the population. The population of current research study covers the total number of teacher's serving in Gomal University in 2010-11.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Sampling is a process of selecting a sufficient number of elements from the population so that by studying the sample and understanding the properties or the characteristics of the sample subjects, it would be possible to generalize the properties or characteristics of the population elements. The need for choosing the right sample for a research investigation cannot be overemphasized. It is true that a sample will rarely be the exact replica of the population from which it is drawn. Best Jahn.W,(2006) mentioned that however there is always the slight possibility that sample values might fall outside the population parameters. It is possible to choose the sample in such a way that it is representative of the population.

A sample of 250 teachers including 210 male and 40 female teachers was drawn out of 369 of total population of teaching departments. Sekaran (2003) suggested about an ideal sample size to be 115 in number because a thirty percent response is considered acceptable. In this case the sample size is close to the total population and number 250 was drawn to make it a round number. 50 questionnaires were distributed for a pre-test during the pilot study and the contents of the questionnaire were revised according to the feedback results.

Methods of Data Collection

Both qualitative and quantitative data was included in this study.

Secondary data was compiled and arranged after a thorough study of a number of related books and research Journals. To add the updated information and new developments about the phenomenon of stress internet proved to be a very helpful source.

Primary data was gathered mostly with the help of the self-administered questionnaire prepared and distributed by the authors. Occasionally telephonic interviews and e-mail reminders were sent for the missing responses. The teacher’s cooperation was appreciable in this regard.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Coping strategies are used and applied as a remedial measure to heal stress. Results for the usage of coping strategies were analyzed by group statistics as under:-

Table 1. Group Statistics for coping strategies

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Religious Strategies	Male	210	4.19	.34	.02
	Female	40	3.63	.31	.04
Social Strategies	Male	210	2.81	.57	.03
	Female	40	2.16	.43	.06
Behavioral Strategies	Male	210	2.53	.54	.03
	Female	40	1.86	.46	.07
Cognitive Strategies	Male	210	2.99	.50	.03
	Female	40	2.61	.43	.06
Defensive Strategies	Male	210	2.59	.39	.02
	Female	40	2.17	.39	.06
Exercise Strategies	Male	210	2.43	.43	.03
	Female	40	2.03	.46	.07

The above table presents the descriptive statistics of N, Mean values and standard deviation both for male and female teachers the use of coping strategies. It is clear from the table that the mean value of male teacher is higher for the usage of all six groups of coping strategies.

The table below presents the results for independent sample t- test. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances for religious strategies indicate that F=.146 and p value is .703 since p>.001 therefore it is non-significant.

For social strategies F=3.493 and p value is .063 since p>.001 so the gender difference is non-significant.

For behavioral strategies F=3.422 and p value is .066 since p>.001 therefore the difference is non-significant.

Table 2. Independent sample T- Test for Gender difference in the Usage of Coping Strategies

		<i>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</i>		<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>						
		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Error Difference</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</i>	
									<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Religious Strategies	Equal variances assumed	.146	.703	9.647	248	.000	.55397	.05742	.44087	.66707
	Equal variances not assumed			10.168	57.727	.000	.55397	.05448	.44490	.66304
Social Strategies	Equal variances assumed	3.493	.063	6.821	248	.000	.65337	.09579	.46470	.84204
	Equal variances not assumed			8.237	67.959	.000	.65337	.07933	.49508	.81167
Behavioral Strategies	Equal variances assumed	3.422	.066	7.302	248	.000	.67035	.09181	.48952	.85117
	Equal variances not assumed			8.092	60.940	.000	.67035	.08284	.50469	.83600
Cognitive Strategies	Equal variances assumed	2.154	.143	4.383	248	.000	.37551	.08566	.20679	.54423
	Equal variances not assumed			4.841	60.701	.000	.37551	.07756	.22040	.53062
Defensive Strategies	Equal variances assumed	.607	.437	6.145	248	.000	.42262	.06877	.28716	.55807
	Equal variances not assumed			6.227	55.570	.000	.42262	.06787	.28665	.55859
Exercise Strategies	Equal variances assumed	.944	.332	5.288	248	.000	.40476	.07654	.25401	.55551
	Equal variances not assumed			5.070	52.954	.000	.40476	.07984	.24462	.56490

For cognitive strategies F=2.154 and p value is .143 since p>.001 the difference is non-significant.

For defensive strategies $F=601$ and p value is $.437$. $p>.001$ therefore the difference is non-significant.

For exercise strategies $F=.944$ and p value is $.332$. Since $p>.001$ therefore the difference between the mean of two groups is non-significant.

We can conclude that there is no significant gender difference in using the coping strategies by both male and female teachers.

Hypothesis Findings

H_{01} . There is no awareness about using the coping strategies among the teachers.	Rejected
H_{02} . There is no significant gender based difference in using the coping strategies.	Accepted

Findings of the Study

Six major groups of coping strategies to find out how successfully the teachers were using the effective mechanism for stress management. The style and nature of questions asked demanded a cross tabulation of frequencies and percentage responses on the basis of gender. Each and every question asked in this part was analyzed in a separate covered.

It was found that both male and female teachers were aware about the usage of coping strategies and they were constantly applying them from “not at all”, “rarely”, “sometimes” to “often” and “very often”. In table number 4.82 and 4.83 which provided the descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test for the computed variables of six groups of coping strategies. It was also found on the basis of results of descriptive statistics that the male teachers were having a slightly higher mean value than female teachers for all groups of strategies. The results of Levene’s Test also proved a non-significant difference for gender of respondent’s and the usage of coping strategies.

Limitations of the Study

The present study was conducted with utmost care of data collection and interpretation to find out the truth and reality keeping in view the privacy etiquettes. An important fact to mention is that the research was subject to certain limitations of methodology.

1. Researcher belongs to the teaching community and served the university for more than thirty years. Her sympathies and sincerity with the teachers may have led to an unintentional bias. Researcher tried to be neutral but it is quite natural to have a soft corner about feeling the difficulties of teaching community.
2. Researcher selected a round figure of 250 teachers using a purposive sampling. Female teachers formed an unequal ratio because of their limited number in the teaching departments. To select a sample from a population having the homogeneous characteristics study included only the teaching departments and was not extended to affiliated schools and colleges. The time, labor and the cost constraint were also involved. Therefore the study suffers the limitation of not using a very large and extended sample size.
3. Limitations of measuring were also involved up to some extent. The researcher studied a number of instruments about various dimensions of teaching stress. Combining and adjusting all in one questionnaire on a uniform scale of measurement was a difficult task. Each part of the study demanded a different statistical test for a proper interpretation of data. Researcher used the SPSS and selected only those tests which were advised in the online tutorial help dialogue boxes. The data presentation

and interpretation may not meet a highly sophisticated standard of expertise.

4. Excess to the information from the relevant administration sections was not easy. The information provided on the Gomal University website, prospectus and electoral list of GUASA proved insufficient and the researcher relied on personal contacts to collect the required data regarding the teaching staff strength, department wise information about the qualification and designation of the teacher concerned. The administrative staff was reluctant to provide such basic figures and information even for the research purpose. Despite these shortcomings the researcher is satisfied to complete and furnish the study which is no doubt of a great practical importance.

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