

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF COPING RESOURCES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract:

The present study aimed to examine and compare the coping resources of male and female college students. The study sought to identify the extent to which sex differences influence the utilization of various coping dimensions such as cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical resources. The sample consisted of 480 college students (240 males and 240 females). Data were analyzed using the t-test to determine differences between male and female students. The results revealed that males and females significantly differed in total coping resources, with males scoring higher than females. Specifically, significant differences were found in social, spiritual, and physical coping resources, whereas no significant differences were found in cognitive and emotional resources. The findings suggest that male students make greater use of certain coping strategies than female students, indicating sex-based variations in coping patterns among college students.

Keywords: *Coping resources, College students, Sex difference, Coping dimensions*

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Introduction:

Coping refers to the constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts used to manage specific internal or external demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of an individual (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). College students, particularly in their late adolescence and early adulthood, face numerous stressors such as academic pressure, social adjustment, and career uncertainty. The ability to cope effectively with these challenges plays a crucial role in maintaining psychological well-being.

Coping resources are the personal and environmental assets that enable individuals to manage stress effectively (Hammer, Marting, & Hammer, 1988). These resources are typically categorized into five domains — cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical. Cognitive coping involves problem-solving and rational appraisal of stress; social coping reflects reliance on interpersonal relationships; emotional coping involves regulation of affective states; spiritual coping denotes reliance on faith or existential meaning; and physical coping encompasses behaviors that enhance physical well-being.

Previous research has shown that males and females differ significantly in their coping patterns. For instance, Frydenberg and Lewis (1993) found that female students tend to use emotion-focused and social-support strategies more frequently, whereas males rely more on problem-focused and avoidance strategies. Similarly, Ptacek, Smith, and Dodge (1994) reported that males are more likely to use rational and task-oriented coping, while females emphasize emotional and relational responses.

In the Indian context, studies such as those by Kaur and Kaur (2015) and Singh and Bhatia (2018) also indicate notable gender differences in coping. However, findings are inconsistent across cultural settings, necessitating further exploration among Indian college populations. Hence, the present study was undertaken to examine the sex differences in coping resources among college students and to determine the dimensions where such differences are most evident.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To assess the level of coping resources among college students.
2. To compare male and female college students on various dimensions of coping resources.
3. To examine the sex differences in cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions of coping resources.
4. To determine whether there is a significant difference in total coping resources between male and female college students.

Hypotheses of the Study:

1. There will be a significant difference between male and female college students in their overall coping resources.
2. Male and female college students will significantly differ in their **cognitive coping resources**.
3. Male and female college students will significantly differ in their **social coping resources**.
4. Male and female college students will significantly differ in their **emotional coping resources**.
5. Male and female college students will significantly differ in their **spiritual coping resources**.
6. Male and female college students will significantly differ in their **physical coping resources**.

Methodology

Sample : The study was conducted on a sample of **480 college students** (240 males and 240 females) drawn from various colleges affiliated with **Shivaji University, Kolhapur**, Maharashtra. The participants were selected using a **simple random sampling method**. The age range of the students was between **18 to 23 years**. All participants were regular degree students from the arts, commerce, and science streams.

Tool:

1. Coping Resource Inventory (CRI)

The revised version of the *Coping Resources Inventory* (Susan Marting & Allen Hamer, 2004) was used to assess coping behavior. This 60-item measure evaluates five types of coping resources—cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual/philosophical, and physical—on a 4-point Likert scale. Respondents indicated how each statement described them during the past six months. The total scale has high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$) and good test-retest reliability ($r = .73$ over six weeks). Subscale reliabilities range from .71 to .84, with validity supported by intercorrelations around .50. The Marathi translation of the CRI was reviewed by psychology experts, refined based on their suggestions, and used for data collection among college students.

Procedure:

The CRI was administered in classroom settings with prior consent from college authorities and participants. Standardized instructions were followed. The responses were scored and tabulated according to the manual. Confidentiality of data was maintained throughout the process.

Statistical Analysis:

Data were analyzed using **Mean**, **Standard Deviation (SD)**, and **Independent Sample *t*-test** to determine differences between male and female students. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.01$.

Results and Discussion:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Coping Resources

	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum	N (Sample Size)
Coping resource	156.89	166.00	166.00	47.33	-0.335	-0.393	51	240	480

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for coping resources among the college student sample. The mean score of coping resources was **156.89**, with a **median and mode of 166**, indicating that the central tendency leans slightly higher than the mean. The **standard deviation (SD = 47.33)** reflects a moderate variation in coping resources across participants. The distribution showed a **slight negative skewness (-0.335)** and **platykurtic kurtosis (-0.393)**, suggesting that most students scored toward the higher end of the coping resource scale, with relatively fewer extreme scores. The scores ranged from **51 to 240**, within the possible range of the CRI, across a sample of **480 college students**.

Table 2 Showing the Sex Comparison on Coping Resources

Source of Coping Resources	Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	't'	Sig. (p-value)
Cognitive	Male	240	30.52	3.16	478	1.172	NS
	Female	240	30.82	4.52			
Social	Male	240	40.02	4.12		3.916	0.01
	Female	240	38.40	4.93			
Emotional	Male	240	44.09	5.29		0.335	NS
	Female	240	43.89	7.33			
Spiritual	Male	240	32.85	3.88		4.872	0.01
	Female	240	31.01	4.38			
Physical	Male	240	31.11	5.50		3.242	0.01
	Female	240	29.74	3.58			
Total Coping Resources	Male	240	178.59	9.71		4.407	0.01
	Female	240	173.68	14.27			

The findings of the study revealed that there is a **significant difference** between male and female college students in their total coping resources ($t = 4.407, p < 0.01$). Male students scored significantly higher ($M = 178.59, SD = 9.71$) than female students ($M = 173.68, SD = 14.27$). Thus, **Hypothesis 1** is **accepted**.

Significant differences were observed in **social, spiritual, and physical coping resources**, where male students reported greater utilization of these coping mechanisms. These results are consistent with findings by **Singh and Bhatia (2018)**, who observed that male students rely more on action-oriented and behavioral coping strategies compared to females. Similarly, **Kaur and Kaur (2015)** reported that males tend to depend on external and physical forms of coping, whereas females emphasize emotional and interpersonal strategies.

However, **no significant difference** was found in **cognitive and emotional coping resources**, suggesting that both male and female students employ similar levels of rational thinking and emotional regulation while handling

stress. These findings partially support **Frydenberg and Lewis (1993)**, who noted that cognitive coping often shows minimal sex variation among adolescents. Thus, **Hypotheses 2 and 4 are rejected**, while **Hypotheses 3, 5, and 6 are accepted**.

Overall, the results suggest that while male students utilize a broader range of coping resources, females display more balanced but less intensive coping patterns. This difference could be attributed to cultural and social expectations influencing the coping behavior of male and female students in Indian society.

Conclusion:

1. Male and female college students differ significantly in total coping resources.
2. Males utilize more social coping resources than females.
3. Males utilize more spiritual coping resources than females.
4. Males utilize more physical coping resources than females.
5. There is no significant sex difference in cognitive coping resources.
6. There is no significant sex difference in emotional coping resources.

Implications of the study:

The findings of the present study have several practical and research-related implications. First, counseling interventions in colleges should be tailored to enhance students' coping resources, especially in areas where deficiencies are observed. By identifying students who may be at risk due to lower utilization of social, spiritual, or physical coping strategies, counselors can provide targeted support to strengthen these domains and improve overall stress management.

Second, the study highlights the importance of developing **gender-sensitive mental health programs**. Since male and female students differ in the use of certain coping resources, interventions should consider these variations to ensure that support strategies are effective for both sexes. For example, programs for female students may emphasize strengthening social and physical coping skills, whereas programs for male students may focus on emotional and cognitive strategies to maintain balance.

Finally, the results indicate directions for future research. Further studies can explore how academic stream, socio-economic background, and personality traits influence coping patterns among college students. Understanding these additional factors can help design comprehensive, evidence-based interventions that enhance coping abilities and promote psychological well-being across diverse student populations.

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