



Influence of Coping Strategies on Academic Anxiety, Burnout among Young Adults

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Abstract: Academic requirements are important aspects in a students' life to achieve their goals and meet the expectations especially during young adulthood, which increases the mental pressure related to academic work, making effective coping strategies crucial. The present study examined the influence of coping strategies on academic anxiety, burnout among university students, with a specific focus on the mediating role of academic anxiety. Using a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design, data were collected through online survey from 261 young adults enrolled in higher education institutions. Participants completed measures of Brief-COPE, Academic Anxiety Scale, and Burnout Assessment Tool Student Version (BAT-S). The analyses conducted to examine the proposed relationships were descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson's correlation, multiple regression, and mediation analyses. The results revealed that emotion-focused and avoidant coping strategies were significantly linked with higher levels of academic anxiety and burnout, whereas problem-focused coping was not significantly related to either academic anxiety or burnout. There was a strong and positive connection between academic anxiety with burnout, and the mediation was there between the variables, between the maladaptive coping and burnout through academic anxiety. This promotes the use of adaptive style of coping for a better mental health state and helps in reducing academic anxiety among students.

Keywords: *Coping Strategies, Academic Anxiety, Burnout, Young Adults, Higher Education*

1. Introduction

Young adulthood is characterized by major transitions in a person's life. The constant worry or fear of studies, unable to deal with the stressors and having physiological bodily effects related academic work or tasks and evaluation is known as academic anxiety (Putwain, 2007). The state of emotional exhaustion, detachment from academic activities, and a diminished sense of academic competence resulting from the long period of academic pressure causes a state which is known as academic burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Initially this concept was used only in occupational or workplace settings, but the increasing amount of work and responsibilities students have these days in educational contexts is in greater amount, accounting it to be used in educational settings too (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Coping strategies is a process not just a trait behaviour where an individuals' cognitive processing is used to manage the stress perceived as a challenge to that person and the reaction of it to deal with the specific situation or stress is basically know as coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These strategies are commonly classified into three sub-dimensions known as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance-oriented coping (Carver et al., 1989). Problem-focused coping is described as healthy or adaptive coping strategies because it helps an individual focus on the specific stressor and deal with the situation head-on (Compas et al., 2001). In contrast, maladaptive strategies, which has two main domains emotional-focused, which particularly focuses on emotional regulation and emotional responses and avoidant-based, which is avoiding the situation as whole (Gan et al., 2007).

Even after having the extensive amount of research in our field, most of those studies do not involve this specific area of the study with coping strategies, academic anxiety, and burnout together as a model, as well as the Indian context for this specific area is very little to nothing which is why it is focused on these specific parts. My aim for this research study is to investigate the influence of coping strategies on academic anxiety and burnout among the population of young adults. The need is to study both adaptive and maladaptive styles of coping which will influence the levels of academic anxiety and further risk to burnout, the main population of my study was from Indian universities in a more generalized population including all the students from different background, area and gender university students in India.

2. Review Of Literature

Guo et al. (2025) explored the internal willpower and academic involvement among Chinese college students which is affected by adaptive coping styles. Data was collected through questionnaires; study administered a mediation analysis with intervention also used to further explore the findings. The study found that stress affects motivation to learn and declines the engagement in academics, adaptive coping was effective to reduce stress, in the later part students with healthy coping mechanisms showed increase in both factors.

Arya et al. (2023) aimed to examine burnout among university students, the difference in the exhaustion levels between undergraduate and postgraduate students. The study was administered in Delhi-NCR, India with 150 participants divided equally in both programmes from various different universities. Oldenburg Burnout Inventory-Student Version was administered for data collection through both online and offline surveys. The findings showed both groups had equal amount of exhaustion but undergraduate were more likely to feel disconnected with their academics.

Kaur Khaira et al. (2023) through a systematic review of 722 research studied various different coping which helps decreasing test anxiety among university students in nursing. Literature review was done from four verified sources ranging from 2016 to 2021 and after sorting out 11 major studies were selected, PRISMA model. The studied found that sensory techniques paired with music tends to be most effective for relaxation, second effective was physical relaxation and lastly therapies assisted with animal, focusing on imagination turn out to be effective techniques.

Freyhofer et al. (2021) conducted a longitudinal study with 881 undergraduate students as participants, to understand the connection between depression and anxiety as well as academic performance with some other mediating factors affecting this relationship, isolation during COVID-19. First-year bachelor students administered six different scales to assess the variables, mediation model, factor analyses and exploratory analyse were used in this study design. The results suggest a chain process forming in this, COVID-19 being the trigger which students coping up with different styles, maladaptive styles lead to higher anxiety and depression which further turns into isolation leading to procrastination and lower level of academic performance.

Singh et al. (2016) examined the stress among final year medical students due to the transition from academic pressure to clinical work dealing with all the high-stress environment. The data was collected from final-year college medical students with assessments to measure various variables stress, burnout and coping with using standardized scales. The study showed

53.5% students had general psychological distress, students with medical family background had less levels of stress due to support, and 46.4% students had reduced self-believe, anxiety through depression 5.1%, and emotional detachment 41.4% students.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim

The present study aimed to examine the role of coping strategies in predicting academic anxiety and burnout among young adults.

3.2 Research Objectives

- a. To examine the relationship between coping strategies and academic anxiety among young adults.
- b. To examine the relationship between academic anxiety and burnout.
- c. To assess the predictive role of adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies on academic anxiety.
- d. To examine whether academic anxiety mediates the relationship between coping strategies and burnout.

3.3 Hypotheses

H1: Maladaptive coping strategies will predict higher levels of academic anxiety and will predict higher levels of burnout.

H2: Adaptive coping strategies will predict lower levels of academic anxiety and will not significantly predict burnout.

H3: Academic anxiety will mediate the relationship between maladaptive coping strategies and burnout.

H4: Academic anxiety will not mediate the relationship between adaptive coping strategies and burnout.

3.4 Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design to examine the influence of coping strategies on academic anxiety and burnout among young adults. A quantitative approach was selected for this study as to measure the psychological trends using standardized tools. By using a cross-sectional research design allowed an efficient data collection from a large amount of student sample. The research also used correlational design because the primary objective of the study was to examine the predictive and mediational relationship between the variables.

3.5 Sample

The sample consisted of 261 university students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programs across various higher education institutions. The age range of the participants were from 18 to 30 years. The method of convenience sampling was used to gather the data, it was the most effective, efficient and practical method especially for online data collection through survey to reach the student populations.

3.6 Measures

3.6.1. Brief COPE Inventory

In this study coping strategies were assessed using the Brief COPE Inventory developed by Carver (1997). The Brief COPE is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 28 items, designed to measure 14 different coping styles, with each style assessed by two items. Responses are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (I haven't been doing this at all) to 4 (I've been doing this a lot).

3.6.2. Academic Anxiety Scale

Academic anxiety was measured using an Academic Anxiety Scale (Cassady et al., 2019). The scale consists of 11 items rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all typical of me) to 4 (Very typical of me). The higher total score shows higher levels of anxiety.

3.6.3. Burnout Assessment Tool Student Version (BAT-S)

Burnout was assessed using the Burnout Assessment Tool Student Version (BAT-S) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2020). Participants responded to items using a Likert-type scale 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), with higher scores indicating greater levels of burnout. The dimensions also get calculated higher scores showing great levels of that specific domain.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for age and the primary study variables are presented. The sample consisted of 261 participants. Participants reported moderate levels of problem-focused coping ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.61$) and emotion-focused coping ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 0.51$). Comparatively, avoidant coping was reported at a lower level ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 0.57$). With respect to outcome variables, participants demonstrated moderate levels of academic anxiety ($M = 25.13$, $SD = 8.27$) and moderate levels of burnout ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.85$).

4.2 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of all study instruments. The Brief COPE subscales demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency for problem-focused coping (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$), emotion-focused coping (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.73$), and avoidant coping (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.74$). The Academic Anxiety Scale showed excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$), and the Burnout Assessment Tool Student Version, including its subscales, also demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$).

4.3 Correlational Analysis

Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among coping strategies, academic anxiety, and burnout. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 4.4. Results indicated that emotion-focused coping and avoidant coping were significantly and positively correlated with both academic anxiety and burnout. Academic anxiety demonstrated a strong positive correlation with burnout ($r = .69, p < .001$), suggesting that higher levels of academic anxiety were associated with higher levels of burnout. In contrast, problem-focused coping was not significantly correlated with academic anxiety or burnout.

Table 4.3: Pearson correlation among coping strategies, academic anxiety, and burnout

		Problem-Focused Coping	Emotional-Focused Coping	Avoidant-Coping	Academic Anxiety	Burnout
Problem-Focused Coping	Pearson's r	—				
	df	—				
	p -value	—				
Emotional-Focused Coping	Pearson's r	0.66***	—			
	df	259	—			
	p -value	<.001	—			
Avoidant-Coping	Pearson's r	0.10	0.51***	—		
	df	259	259	—		
	p -value	0.101	<.001	—		
Academic Anxiety	Pearson's r	0.10	0.40***	0.52***	—	
	df	259	259	259	—	
	p -value	0.095	<.001	<.001	—	
Burnout	Pearson's r	0.10	0.36***	0.51***	0.69***	—
	df	259	259	259	259	—
	p -value	0.106	<.001	<.001	<.001	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

4.4 Regression analysis predicting Academic Anxiety

				Overall Model Test			
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.55	0.30	0.29	36.92	3	257	<.001

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. As seen in Table 4.5 and 4.6. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 257) = 36.92$, $p < .001$, explaining approximately 30% of the variance in academic anxiety ($R^2 = .30$). Examination of individual predictors revealed that emotion-focused coping ($\beta = .28$, $p = .001$) and avoidant coping ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$) were significant positive predictors of academic anxiety. In contrast, problem-focused coping did not significantly predict academic anxiety.

Table 4.4: Model summary for predictors of academic anxiety

Note. Models estimated using sample size of N=261

4.5 Regression Analysis predicting Burnout

A second multiple regression analysis was conducted. As seen in Table 4.7 and 4.8. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 257) = 31.98$, $p < .001$, accounting for approximately 27% of the variance in burnout ($R^2 = .27$). Results showed that avoidant coping ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$) and emotion-focused coping ($\beta = .19$, $p = .031$) significantly predicted burnout. Problem-focused coping was not a significant predictor of burnout. These findings suggest that maladaptive coping strategies contribute directly to burnout, whereas adaptive coping strategies do not exert a significant direct effect.

Table 4.5: Model summary for predictors of burnout

				Overall Model Test			
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.52	0.27	0.26	31.98	3	257	<.001

Note. Models estimated using sample size of N=261

4.6. Mediation

A parallel mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether academic anxiety simultaneously mediates the relationships between coping strategies and burnout. Indirect effects were tested using bootstrap confidence intervals, and mediation was considered statistically significant when the 95% confidence interval (CI) did not include zero. The indirect effect of problem-focused coping on burnout through academic anxiety was not statistically

significant, Estimate = -0.10 , $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI $[-0.23, 0.02]$, $\beta = -0.07$, $z = -1.62$, $p = .106$.

In contrast, the indirect effect of emotional-focused coping on burnout via academic anxiety was statistically significant, Estimate = 0.27 , $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI $[0.10, 0.46]$, $\beta = 0.16$, $z = 3.17$,

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	95% C.I. (a)		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	Problem-Focused Coping $\Rightarrow$ Academic Anxiety $\Rightarrow$ Burnout	-0.10	0.06	-0.23	0.02	-0.07	-1.62	0.106
	Emotional-Focused Coping $\Rightarrow$ Academic Anxiety $\Rightarrow$ Burnout	0.27	0.09	0.10	0.46	0.16	3.17	0.002
	Avoidant-Coping $\Rightarrow$ Academic Anxiety $\Rightarrow$ Burnout	0.34	0.06	0.20	0.51	0.23	5.32	<.001
Component	Problem-Focused Coping $\Rightarrow$ Academic Anxiety	-1.64	1.00	-3.66	0.35	-0.12	-1.64	0.102
	Academic Anxiety $\Rightarrow$ Burnout	0.06	0.01	0.05	0.07	0.58	11.19	<.001
	Emotional-Focused Coping $\Rightarrow$ Academic Anxiety	4.59	1.39	1.67	7.32	0.28	3.30	<.001
	Avoidant-Coping $\Rightarrow$ Academic Anxiety	5.66	0.94	3.72	7.64	0.39	6.04	<.001
Direct	Problem-Focused Coping $\Rightarrow$ Burnout	0.00	0.09	-0.19	0.18	0.00	0.05	0.959
	Emotional-Focused Coping $\Rightarrow$ Burnout	0.04	0.12	-0.21	0.32	0.03	0.36	0.715
	Avoidant-Coping $\Rightarrow$ Burnout	0.29	0.09	0.10	0.46	0.19	3.31	<.001
Total	Problem-Focused Coping $\Rightarrow$ Burnout	-0.09	0.11	-0.33	0.12	-0.07	-0.89	0.375
	Emotional-Focused Coping $\Rightarrow$ Burnout	0.32	0.15	-0.01	0.65	0.19	2.18	0.029
	Avoidant-Coping $\Rightarrow$ Burnout	0.62	0.10	0.42	0.84	0.42	6.33	<.001

$p = .002$. Similarly, the indirect effect of avoidant coping on burnout through academic anxiety was statistically significant, Estimate = 0.34 , $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI $[0.20, 0.51]$, $\beta = 0.23$, $z = 5.32$, $p < .001$. The parallel mediation model indicated that academic anxiety acts as an important psychological factor linking maladaptive coping strategies specifically emotional-focused and avoidant coping to burnout. Problem-focused coping showed no significant direct or indirect association with burnout.

Table 4.6: Mediation of Academic Anxiety in the Relationship Between Coping Strategies and Burnout

Note. Confidence intervals computed with method: Bootstrap percentiles

Note. Betas are completely standardized effect sizes

5. Discussion

This study of mine showed there is an alignment between academic anxiety and emotional-based coping, emotional regulation theories also work well with my findings suggesting that strategies which aim only to remove the emotional discomfort (Gross, 1998; Aldao et al., 2010). Similarly, avoidant coping strategy was strongly linked to academic anxiety as shown in the results, consistent with the existing research showing that avoiding the stressors often leads to chronic anxiety (Holahan et al., 2005). There is an absence of any significant connection and relationship between problem-focused coping and academic anxiety. This present study also concluded that emotion-focused and avoidant coping significantly predicted academic burnout. The absence of the direct link and significant relationship between problem-focused coping and burnout is consistent with findings from previous studies suggesting that adaptive coping can only be effective against burnout. The result of the mediation shows a strong empirical backing for transactional and process-oriented of stress models in line with Lazarus and Folkman (1984). This finding is also consistent with the Process Model of Emotion Regulation (Gross, 2015), which suggests there might be an increase of emotional intensity and persistent negative thoughts with the use of maladaptive regulation strategies. The direct effects likely manifest as behavioural disengagement and motivational withdrawal, while indirect effects highlight anxiety as a key emotional driver.

The lack of mediation for problem-focused coping suggest that adaptive coping does not primarily reduce burnout through reducing the anxiety. Instead, problem-focused coping may enhance or build self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), improve goals, and academic competence, this indicates that adaptive coping shields students from burnout through motivation. These findings validate the relevance of Western models of coping and burnout to an Indian university context, supporting cross-cultural differences in stressors like contextual pressures such as performance pressure and high expectations from family. Students who experience high levels of anxiety may benefit from the interventions targeted for these students such as cognitive-behavioural techniques (Beck, 2011), stress management training workshops, and mindfulness-based strategies, has also been proven to show a reduced amount of anxiety.

5.1. Limitations

Despite its contributions, the present study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, due to the time limit the study employed a cross-sectional research design. Second, this study relied on self-report measures which may introduce a main limitation of response biases. Third, the use of convenience sampling which

usually limits the generalizability of the results. The present study mainly focused academic anxiety as mediating factor.

5.2. Future Directions

To provide the field with more advanced and better in-depth research this can be done through longitudinal design. This can also be good to conduct experimental research to develop interventions, to see whether the coping skills training can be effective. Studying the different cultural area can provide another insight to this topic which can help generalize our findings. Then lastly this would suggest that future studies could focus more on the positive aspects of the factors.

6. Conclusion

The results and discussion this research concludes that academic anxiety did play a crucial role in mediating between the relationship between coping strategies and academic burnout. The maladaptive coping style can lead to higher level of academic anxiety which can later cause burnout due to the amount of pressure and stress. The finding of academic anxiety as core factor linking other two variables coping and burnout can have an importance for early intervention and to help the students. This will benefit us to teach adaptive coping to the students and find out their problems and help enhance their skills and reduce the anxiety and burnout levels. There are some limitations to this study but considering them too this provides a strong foundation for future research and development of intervention.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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