
THE PREDICTIVE ROLE OF COPING STRATEGIES IN RELATION TO MINDFULNESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to find out the relationship between mindfulness and coping among college students. The sample of study comprises of 266 undergraduate college students and data was collected using five facet mindfulness questionnaire (Bear et al, 2006) and Brief Cope Inventory (Carver, 1997). Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses were employed to analyze the data. The results of correlation analysis revealed that mindfulness has inverse relationship with dysfunctional coping; whereas, it has no relationship with problem focused coping and emotion focused coping. Dysfunctional coping and problem focused coping emerged as significant predictors of mindfulness. The study highlights the importance of integrating mindfulness training and coping enhancement programs into college settings to foster resilience, reduce stress, and promote psychological well-being among students.

KEYWORDS: *Mindfulness, problem focused coping, emotion focused coping, dysfunctional coping.*

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the quality of awareness and attention that can be developed and cultivated through meditation. Mindfulness is the awareness that comes through purposeful observation or paying attention to the present moment and non-judgmentally unfolding of the experience moment by moment. Mindfulness is considered as synonymous of insight and meditation which means a penetrative and deep seeing into the mind and world (Zinn, 2003). Mindfulness can be defined as particular way of paying attention on purpose in the present

moment non-judgmentally. It is an individual's ability to direct the attention to his experience in every moment with an attitude of open mindedness, curiosity and acceptance (Soamya, 2014). It is a state of being aware and observing what is happening in the present (Brown & Ryan, 2013). This is a process of attending to one's sensations, thoughts and emotions without evaluating these as good or bad (Baer, 2003).

Coping

The coping refers to the way of handling stress or the effort to master situations of threat, challenge or harm when a routine or automatic response is not readily available (Pestonjee, 1999). It is conceptualized as a person's different responses to get through stressful circumstances (Dobson, 2012). The ways to deal with troublesome and stressful situations are defined as coping. It is one's effort to solve problems and handle problematic circumstances (Lim et al., 2013). The coping is transitory behavioral and cognitive effort emerged to fulfill the specific demands both internal and external that goes beyond one's resources (Salas et al., 2017). The coping can be classified as problem focused coping, emotion focused coping and dysfunctional coping. Problem focused coping is an adaptive type of coping which deals with specific planning and actively engaging in a particular behavior to tackle with problem causing distress. Emotion focused coping involves an effort to regulate or control the emotions evoked by the stressful situations. Dysfunctional coping involves focus on and venting of unpleasant feelings (Carver, 1997).

Review of Related Literature

The studies of VanderHyde (2017) and Ozcan (2019) observed higher levels of mindfulness among students. Dix (2017) found above average level of mindfulness and an average level of emotion focused coping. It was further found that mindfulness has no relationship with emotion focused coping. The study of Pacic-Turk & Pavlovic (2020) reported higher levels of mindfulness and an average level of emotion focused coping among students.

The mindfulness has positive and significant relationship with problem focused coping and emotion focused coping (Markovic, 2008). Palmer & Rodger (2009) has found that mindfulness has negative and significant relationship with emotion focused coping and dysfunctional coping. This study further elaborated the significant contribution of dysfunctional coping in predicting mindfulness.

Objectives

- To study mindfulness and coping among college students.
- To study the relationship between mindfulness and coping among college students.
- Coping as predictor of mindfulness among college students.

Hypotheses

- There will be no significant relationship between mindfulness and coping among college students.
- Coping will be the significant predictor of mindfulness among college students.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method was used to study mindfulness and coping among college students. Mean, standard deviation and range was calculated to assess the level of mindfulness and coping among college students. The coefficient of correlation was computed to find out the relationship between mindfulness and coping. The regression analysis was employed to study contribution of coping in predicting mindfulness among college students.

Sample

To study mindfulness and coping of college students, sample of 280 first year undergraduate students was selected randomly. The data was collected from college students of Government Mahindara College, Patiala; Government Ranbir College, Sangrur and Government College Malerkotla.

Tools Used

- **Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)** developed by Baer et al. (2006) was employed to assess mindfulness. This tool measures five dimensions of mindfulness—observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging, and non-reactivity.
- **Brief COPE Inventory** developed by Carver (1997) was used to measure coping strategies. It consists of three broad categories: problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and dysfunctional coping.

Procedure

The participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality. After obtaining informed consent, the questionnaires were administered in a group setting

during regular class hours. Standard instructions were given to ensure uniformity in administration.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, range) to assess levels of mindfulness and coping strategies. Pearson's product-moment correlation was employed to examine the relationship between mindfulness and different coping strategies. Further, stepwise regression analysis was conducted to identify the predictive role of coping strategies in determining mindfulness among college students.

Analysis and interpretation of data

The research findings based on collected data are presented in the form of tables. To study the level of mindfulness and coping among college students, the mean, standard deviation and range was calculated. The results are presented below:

Table 1: Level of Mindfulness and Coping among College Students. (N=280)

Variables	Mean (SD)	Minimum- Maximum
Mindfulness (39-195)	130.23 (13.73)	98-176
Problem Focused Coping (6-24)	16.70 (3.45)	8-24
Emotion Focused Coping (10-40)	24.68 (4.20)	14-37
Dysfunctional Coping (12-48)	25.06 (5.04)	13-40

The mindfulness score of college students of Punjab ranges from (98-176) and have higher level of mindfulness with a mean score of 130.23 (SD=13.73). When their coping was analyzed according to the three subscales, the students exhibited an average level of problem focused coping and emotion focused coping with mean scores of 16.70 (SD=3.45) and 24.68 (4.20) respectively. Whereas, their score on dysfunctional coping came out to be below average level with mean score of 25.06 (SD=5.04).

The coefficient of correlation was computed to find out the relationship between mindfulness and coping among college students. The results of correlation analysis are presented in table 2.

Table 2 Correlation Matrix of Mindfulness and Coping. (N=280)

	Mindfulness	Problem Focused Coping	Emotion Focused Coping	Dysfunctional Coping
Mindfulness	1	0.096	0.078	-0.193**
Problem Focused Coping		1	0.409**	0.158**
Emotion Focused Coping			1	0.219**
Dysfunctional Coping				1

p<0.01

The table 2 shows the correlation coefficient between mindfulness and three subscales of coping: problem focused coping, emotion focused coping and dysfunctional coping. The calculated correlation values of mindfulness with problem focused coping and emotion focused coping are 0.096 and 0.078 respectively, which are not significant at 0.05 level. This means that mindfulness has no relationship with problem focused and emotion focused coping. Also, Mindfulness has negative relationship with dysfunctional coping. The coefficient value is -0.193 which is significant at 0.01 level. This illustrates that with the increase in level of mindfulness among the college students, the use of dysfunctional coping decreases.

A regression analysis was employed to predict mindfulness from three coping strategies: problem focused coping, emotion focused coping and dysfunctional coping. The results are given in table 3 and table 4.

Table 3 Regression Analysis for Mindfulness.

Variable entered	R	R square	R square change	Adjusted R square	%age variance	F value
Dysfunctional coping	0.193	0.037	-	0.034	3.7%	10.23
Problem Focused Coping	0.232	0.054	0.016	0.046	1.6%	4.54

Table shows that dysfunctional coping and problem focused coping significantly predicts mindfulness among college students of Punjab. The adjusted R square value reveals that dysfunctional coping predicts up to 3.7% and problem focused coping predicts up to 1.6% of the mindfulness of college students. The F-value of 10.23, significant at 0.01 level explains that dysfunctional coping is significant predictor of mindfulness. The problem focused coping

turns out to be second predictor of mindfulness with F-value 4.54 among college students of Punjab.

Table 4: Model Coefficients. (with Mindfulness as Dependent Variable)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-value
		B	Standard Error	Beta	
1	Constant	143.514	4.207		34.11
	Dysfunctional coping	-0.527	0.165	-0.193	3.19
2	Constant	136.316	5.374		25.367
	Dysfunctional Coping	-0.582	0.166	-0.214	3.516
	Problem Focused Coping	0.515	0.242	0.129	2.131

Further, table 4 depicts that every unit increase in dysfunctional coping causes a 0.166 reduction in mindfulness ($t=3.516$). In this case, decrease in dysfunctional coping leads to increase in level of mindfulness. Whereas, it was found that every unit increase in problem focused coping causes a 0.129-unit increase in mindfulness ($t=2.131$) i.e. mindfulness of college students increases with increase in their problem focused coping.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to find out the relationship between mindfulness and coping among college students. The results of the present study showed that the college students have higher level of mindfulness which is in consonance with the studies of VanderHyde (2017), Ozcan (2019), Pacic-Turk & Pavlovic (2020), Kaur (2025a) & Kaur (2025b). It was further found that college students have an average level of problem focused coping as observed in the studies of Dix (2017) and Pacic-Turk & Pavlovic (2020). However, college students have below average emotion focused coping. This finding is in accordance with the studies of Dix (2017) and Bamonti et al. (2019). Also, the low level of dysfunctional coping is reported among the college students which are in line with the studies of Yigitoglu & Keskin (2019) and Dahiya (2021). The correlation analysis revealed that mindfulness has significant and negative relationship with dysfunctional coping (Pavia, 2025). Further, the regression analysis depicted that dysfunctional coping and problem focused coping significantly predicts mindfulness among college students as supported by Palmer and Rodger (2009). Thus, it may be concluded that with every unit increase in dysfunctional coping the mindfulness of college

students decreases. Whereas, mindfulness of students increases with increase in problem focused coping.

Implications

The present study has implications for both educational institutions and mental health professionals who work with college students. The negative relationship between mindfulness and dysfunctional coping suggests that enhancing mindfulness may serve as a protective factor against maladaptive coping strategies such as denial, behavioral disengagement, or substance use. Therefore, colleges and universities can integrate mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs), such as meditation practices, breathing exercises, and awareness training, into student development programs to promote healthier coping mechanisms.

The predictive role of problem-focused coping further highlights the importance of equipping students with active problem-solving skills. Workshops and counselling sessions that combine mindfulness practices with training in constructive coping strategies may foster adaptive stress management and improve academic as well as emotional well-being. For psychologists and counsellors, the results highlight the need to design interventions that simultaneously reduce dysfunctional coping tendencies while strengthening mindfulness and problem-focused approaches. Future research can further explore these findings by examining longitudinal effects of mindfulness training on coping behaviors across diverse student populations.

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