GENDER DIFFERENCES REGARDING COPING TECHNIQUES AT YOUNG STUDENTS AT PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract
The present study highlights possible gender differences in coping styles techniques. The participants were a number of 205 students of Psychology, both from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences and the Titu Maiorescu University. The instrument was a coping scale adapted on undergraduate students from Pitariu (2010). The results didn’t confirm the hypothesis. Future studies should be focused on testing possible correlation between coping techniques and the faculty specialization, perceived stressors and therapeutically techniques learned in the faculty. A reason that the hypothesis regarding gender differences has not confirmed is that at psychology the students study courses of therapy, clinical psychology, group development. Hence, either male or female has access to the same information regarding coping techniques and procedures.

Cuvinte cheie: tehnici de coping, psihologie, strategie centrată pe problema, performanțe academice.

Keywords: coping techniques: coping techniques, psychology, problem-focused strategy, academic performances.
1. INTRODUCTION

Problem-focused strategies seem to be more often chosen instead of the option centered on emotions and also seems to be more efficient when people are in low control of the situation (DeGroot et al., 1997; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Osowiecki & Compas (1999) have shown than patients suffering from breast cancer who realized their diagnosis can be controlled, utilized coping techniques focused on the problem and reported less depressive and anxious symptoms right after being diagnosed. According to Alexander & Walker (1994) and Greeno & Wing (1994) people might increase alcohol, cigarettes and food consumption, and can also use substances under stress. Jammer & Leigh, (1999); King et al., (1990) have demonstrated that the coping styles centered on emotions is correlated to low cardiovascular stimulation, and also with repressing the self in confronting certain stressful situations. de Chou et al. (2011) has studied the relationship between stress, coping strategies and depressive symptoms among the students of a China University, on a group of 756 students. Thus, the ones who have chosen coping strategies based on a positive attitude and an active problem approach obtained much better results in relation to other evaluated factors. Iamandescu (2002), believes that psychological stress emphasizes awareness of the danger of individual stress agents, taking into account distress. Lundberg (2003; 2004) highlights that academic performance is related to the student's coping techniques. It suggests that although non-traditional students are more apt to work full time, they are not affected by the work or because they have more experience limitations in time management. Combining a diploma at university with work can lead to negative consequences in students missing classes, gives less time learning and experiencing higher levels of stress (Robotham, 2009). A number of studies have demonstrated significant associations observed between stress and subsequent burnout and low academic performance among students from different disciplines (Danoff-Burg, Prelow, & Swenson, 2004; Yang & Farn, 2005, as cited in El-Ghoroury, Galper, Sawaqdeh, Bufka, 2012). Aniței & Chraif (2011) conducted a longitudinal study regarding the vocational guidance on romaniana high school students in psychology profession, Anitei & Chraif (2012) designed Psychologists’ Core
Competencies using BARS method, Chraif & Fulga (2013) highlighted in a study
gender differences in pain perception at undergraduate students at psychology,
Chraif & Anitei (2011) underlined the importance of psychology students
participation at National and International Conferences and Chraif & Anitei (2012)
conducted a study measuring overload learning, attachment and coping strategies
as predictor for mental and physical health of high school students.

2. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. OBJECTIVE

The study is focused on highlighting possible gender differences in coping
techniques at undergraduate students at psychology from all three grades separately.

2.2. HYPOTHESES

• There are statistically significant gender differences in coping techniques
at undergraduate students at psychology from the first grade.
• There are statistically significant gender differences in coping techniques
at undergraduate students at psychology from the second grade.
• There are statistically significant gender differences in coping techniques
at undergraduate students at psychology from the third grade.

3. METHOD

3.1. PARTICIPANTS

A number of 205 Psychology students participated to the study, both from the
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences and Titu Maiorescu University,
123 (60%) being female and 82 (42%) being male. The study has involved 75
(36.6%) first year students, 67 (32.7%) second year students and 63 (30.7%) third
year students.
3.2. INSTRUMENTS

The present study involved applying a coping techniques scale adapted on undergraduate students, based on the coping scale CAPES (Pitariu, 2008). The scale has a number of 13 items on a Likert scale from 1-very low to 6 – very high.

3.3. PROCEDURE

Firstly the participants received the instructions, being informed about the procedure of applying the instrument. In order to complete the questionnaire, the also completed an informed consent form. Applying the scale requested 5 to 9 minutes.

3.4. EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

The independent variable consisted of the participants gender. The dependent variable consisted on the total score of the coping questionnaire which had been adapted for Psychology students.

4. RESULTS

Data analysis has been made using the SPSS 15 software. Thus in table 1 we may notice the descriptive data of the ”total coping” variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Statistics, Table 1</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total_coping</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>69.00</td>
<td>47.0927</td>
<td>7.94998</td>
<td>-.069</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t test means for independent_samples, gender difference, total_group, Table 2</th>
<th>gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total_coping</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>47.6179</td>
<td>7.82233</td>
<td>.70532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>46.3049</td>
<td>8.12205</td>
<td>.89693</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding the first year participants, we have applied the t parametric test for independent samples, noticing a significant means difference for the empathy variable depending on the gender, thus noticing the fact that the male participants (M=66.32, t=-4.02, p.<.005) obtained high scores for the empathy questionnaire compared to the female participants (M=55.59, t=-4.32, p.<.005). In the case of the coping variable, no significant gender differences have been noticed: M=47.34, t=1.95, p.<.005 in the case of female participants and M=43.67, t=1.98, p.<.005 in the case of male participants (table 7a, 7b).
In the case of the third year students, no significant differences were noticed regarding the empathy level between female subjects. As far as coping level differences are concerned, no significant gender differences have been noticed (M=49.94 vs. M=49.19) (table 9a, 9b).
We will also mention that the ANOVA test for significant mean differences has been applied, which lead us to notice statistically significant differences between 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students under the aspect of coping, as the first year students obtained the lowest score (M=45.82), the second year students obtained higher scores (M= 46.22), noticing that towards the ending of higher education studies, during the third year of faculty, the students obtained the highest results (M= 49.52), considering: F=5.37, p.<.05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10. ANOVA</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total_coping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>543,136</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>271,568</td>
<td>4,442</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>12350,103</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>61,139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12893,239</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study proposes the objective of showing possible statistical significant gender differences regarding coping strategies adopted by Psychology students – from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of University of Bucharest and the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Titu Maiorescu University. The participants were a number of 205 students of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of studies. Thus, the research hypothesis was tested for each of the 3 years of studies using the t test of mean difference. Analyzing tables 4-9 allows us to state that there is no significant gender difference regarding coping strategies adopted by psychology students among the samples of the two analyzed faculties. A strong reason that the hypotheses were not confirmed is that at the psychology specialization, the undergraduate students both male and female study group development strategies, psychotherapy courses and clinical psychology courses. Hence, both male and female undergraduate students have access to the same information regarding psychology specialization.
REFERENCES


**REZUMAT**

*In studiul de față obiectivul principal urmărit este eviențierea unor posibile diferențe de gen privind tehniciile de coping folosite la studenții de la psihologie. Participanții sunt un număr de 205 studenți la psihologie, Facultatea de Psihologie și Științele Educației, Universitatea din București și Facultatea de Psihologie și Științele Educației, Universitatea Titu Maiorescu. Instrumentul folosit este scala de coping (Pitariu, 2008) adaptată pe studenți. Rezultatele obținute nu confirm ipotezele cercetării (p<0.05). Studii viitoare ar trebui să se centreze pe testarea corelațiilor între strategiile și tehniciile de coping, specializarea facultății, stresorii autopercepuți și tehnici teleaveutice învățate în facultate. Un motiv pentru care nu s-a confirmat ipoteza cercetării provind diferențele de gen poate fi și faptul că în cadrul specializării psihologie studenții aiată fete cât și băieți studiază tehnici terapeutice, psihologie clinică și dezvoltare personală. Astfel, atât studenți de gen masculine cât și cei de gen feminine au acces în mod egal la aceste cursuri și seminarii despecialitate.*