
Relationship Between Stress Levels, Coping Mechanisms and Psychological Well-Being Among University Students

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between coping mechanisms, perceived stress, and psychological well-being among university students. A total of 103 students from private and government universities participated in this quantitative research. Data were collected using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), the Brief COPE Inventory, and the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB-18) to assess stress levels, coping behaviors, and well-being. Descriptive results indicated moderate stress and coping levels, and relatively high psychological well-being among participants. However, correlation and regression analyses revealed no statistically significant relationships between coping mechanisms and either stress or psychological well-being. Coping mechanisms accounted for only 1.4% of the variance in stress and less than 0.1% in well-being. These findings contrast with prior research emphasizing the importance of coping in mental health. The results suggest that coping, when measured as a general score, may not serve as a strong predictor of student well-being. The study highlights the need for future research to focus on specific coping strategies and other factors like social support and personality traits. Despite limitations related to sampling and study design, the research contributes to a growing understanding of student mental health.

Keywords: *coping mechanisms, stress, psychological well-being, university students, mental health, Brief COPE, PS*

Introduction

This study set out to explore how university students deal with stress, and how the ways they cope might affect their psychological well-being. People typically rely on three main types of coping mechanisms: avoidant, emotion-focused, and problem-focused. Each of these works differently when it comes to managing stress, and their effectiveness can vary from person to person. This research also aims to see whether the way students cope with stress changes (or moderates) the effect that stress has on their overall well-being.

Stress is something everyone experiences—it's simply a part of life. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) describes stress as a state of mental strain or worry that arises from



difficult situations. While it's a natural response that can motivate us to handle challenges, stress can show up in many ways, such as emotional ups and downs, trouble focusing, physical discomfort, poor sleep, or changes in appetite (WHO, 2023). University students, in particular, often deal with a lot of stress on a daily basis. Their lives are filled with academic pressure, financial concerns, personal responsibilities, and sometimes a lack of support from peers or faculty (Porru et al., 2022)—all of which can take a toll on their mental health.

According to the WHO (n.d.), psychological well-being means being able to recognize your abilities, handle everyday stress, work effectively, and contribute to your community. Keyes (2002) adds that well-being is made up of how people feel about their lives—emotionally, socially, and psychologically. Emotional well-being refers to how positive or negative someone feels about life, social well-being is about functioning well in social settings, and psychological well-being relates to personal growth and fulfillment. For this paper, we'll use the term “psychological well-being” to cover all of these areas.

Stress can make it much harder to maintain psychological well-being. It can lead to irritability, anxiety, or even anger, along with physical and mental exhaustion (WHO, 2023). Left unmanaged, stress can worsen existing mental or physical health problems and is often linked to conditions like anxiety and depression. The impact of stress on students is widely recognized. A survey by the American College Health Association (2017, as cited in Hubbard et al., 2018) found that nearly half of students reported above-average stress levels, and about 12% said they were under extreme stress. Most students—87%—said they felt overwhelmed by their responsibilities at some point during the year, and 84% felt emotionally drained. Another report showed that nearly 30% of students had either been diagnosed with or were receiving help for mental health issues, with anxiety and depression being the most common concerns (National College Health Assessment, 2017, as cited in Hubbard et al., 2018). In addition, some students reported turning to unhealthy coping behaviors like substance use or disordered eating. These stressors—whether they are personal, social, academic, or financial—can significantly influence a student's well-being and increase the risk for mental health issues (Hubbard et al., 2018; Li & Hasson, 2020; Barbayannis et al., 2022).

To manage stress, people adopt various coping mechanisms—these are the emotional, cognitive, or behavioral efforts we make to handle challenging situations (Blum et al., 2012). Some people confront the issue directly, while others might try to avoid it, seek support from friends, turn to religion, or use humor. Coping mechanisms are generally grouped into three categories: problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant (Carver, 1997).

Problem-focused coping mechanisms are all about taking action to solve the problem that's causing the stress (Carver et al., 1989). Emotion-focused coping mechanisms, on the other hand, involve managing the feelings that come with stress rather than tackling the issue itself. Avoidant coping mechanisms mean mentally or physically distancing oneself from the problem (Smith et al., 2015). Research has found mixed results when it comes to how helpful



these mechanisms actually are. Problem-focused coping mechanisms tend to be the most effective—they not only reduce stress but are also linked to better mental health outcomes, such as lower anxiety and depression and higher overall well-being (Rodríguez et al., 2014; Rabenu et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2022).

Emotion-focused coping mechanisms have a more complex relationship with well-being. Some studies have found that they're linked to poorer mental health (Rodríguez et al., 2014), while others suggest that specific methods, like seeking social support, can be beneficial. These mechanisms may be especially helpful in situations where the stressor is out of the person's control (Carver et al., 1989). However, the benefits often seem to be short-term, and they may not lead to sustained improvements in well-being over time.

Avoidant coping mechanisms might offer temporary relief, but in the long run, they're often associated with worse mental health outcomes, including higher levels of distress and depression (Balmores-Paulino, 2018; Wang et al., 2022). Interestingly, some studies suggest that coping mechanisms can actually change the way stress affects well-being. For example, Suldo et al. (2008) found that students who used adaptive coping mechanisms—such as positive thinking or seeking support—were better able to manage stress and maintain their psychological health. Conversely, emotion-focused coping mechanisms, when not used carefully, were linked to increased risk for mental health issues. Kumar et al. (2020) also found that proactive coping mechanisms helped buffer the negative effects of stress, while avoidant mechanisms were linked to lower self-acceptance and a reduced sense of purpose. Still, some researchers argue that coping does not act alone—it interacts with other personal and environmental factors, which means its effects are not always straightforward (Taylor & Stanton, 2007).

In short, while coping mechanisms clearly play a role in how stress impacts mental health, the nature of that role is still being explored. This study aims to dig deeper into these connections, especially focusing on whether certain coping styles make students more—or less—resilient to stress.

Given the diverse and sometimes conflicting findings within the existing body of literature, it is evident that further exploration is necessary to clarify the relationship between coping mechanisms, stress, and psychological well-being. This research aims to contribute to this understanding by investigating the following central research question:

“What is the relationship between coping mechanisms, stress, and psychological well-being among university students?”

To address this overarching question comprehensively, the following sub-questions have been formulated:

Q1: To what extent do university students experience stress?

Existing research suggests that stress is a prevalent concern among university students. For instance, the American College Health Association (2017, as cited in Hubbard et al., 2018) reported that a considerable proportion of students experience stress levels that exceed the average. Accordingly, it is anticipated that participants in the current study will report high levels of stress, stemming from academic pressures, personal responsibilities, and social challenges.

Q2: What is the reported level of psychological well-being among university students?

The literature indicates that psychological well-being among students is often compromised due to the multifaceted demands of student life. Academic workload, financial stress, and interpersonal issues frequently affect students' mental health (Hubbard et al., 2018). Therefore, it is expected that university students will report moderate to low levels of psychological well-being.

Q3: What is the relationship between stress and psychological well-being among university students?

Consistent with prior research findings (Li & Hasson, 2020; Barbayannis et al., 2022), it is hypothesized that there is a negative relationship between stress and psychological well-being. Increases in stress are likely to correspond with decreases in psychological well-being among students.

Q4: How does problem-focused coping moderate the relationship between stress and psychological well-being in university students?

Drawing from the literature, it is predicted that students who predominantly use problem-focused coping mechanisms—such as actively addressing stressors—will report lower levels of stress and higher psychological well-being. These individuals are likely to handle academic and personal challenges more effectively than those who rely on less constructive coping approaches.

Q5: How does emotion-focused coping moderate the relationship between stress and psychological well-being in university students?

Emotion-focused coping mechanisms are expected to yield more complex outcomes. While certain behaviors, such as emotional venting, may correlate with increased stress and decreased well-being, others—particularly seeking social support—could offer protective benefits. Thus, this question is likely to produce mixed findings, depending on the specific coping behaviors employed.

Q6: How does avoidant coping moderate the relationship between stress and psychological well-being in university students?

Avoidant coping mechanisms, including denial and disengagement, have frequently been associated with negative psychological outcomes. It is expected that students who habitually engage in avoidant coping will exhibit higher levels of stress and lower psychological well-being, supporting the notion that such strategies are maladaptive in the long term.

Review of Literature

There has been growing interest in understanding the relationship between stress, coping mechanisms, and psychological well-being among university students. As stress levels among students rise, the ways in which they cope—whether through problem-focused, emotion-focused, or avoidant strategies—can have significant effects on their mental health. Factors such as gender, academic discipline, and institutional environment further shape how students approach stress, adding complexity to the dynamics between coping and well-being. This literature review summarizes key findings from recent studies that have explored these relationships, offering insights into how university students manage stress and its impact on their psychological health.

Khurshed and Siddiqui (2022) examined the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on university students, revealing that 48% of students experienced moderate to severe depression, 68% faced heightened anxiety, and 40% reported increased stress levels. Notably, female students and those in social sciences were found to experience higher levels of distress. The study underscores the urgent need for targeted mental health support to help students transition back to in-person learning after the pandemic.

Sivakumar and Jeganathan (2022) investigated how coping styles relate to psychological well-being among 300 university students. They discovered that adaptive coping mechanisms, such as problem-focused coping, were strongly linked to improved well-being, while maladaptive strategies like avoidance and self-blame were associated with poorer mental health. Gender differences were also observed, with female students more likely to use emotion-focused coping strategies.

Khurshid and Zahra (2022) explored the relationship between stress, coping mechanisms, and psychological well-being in a sample of 240 students from both government and private universities. The study found a negative relationship between stress and well-being, with problem-focused coping positively predicting well-being. Gender differences were apparent, with female students reporting higher stress and using emotion-focused coping more frequently. Private university students exhibited better psychological well-being compared to their government university counterparts, indicating that institutional environment plays a crucial role.

Nanda and Behera (2022) conducted a comparative study between government and private university students, finding that private university students predominantly used emotion-focused coping mechanisms, such as seeking support, while government university students



often relied on problem-focused disengagement strategies. This study emphasizes the role of institutional support in shaping students' coping behaviors and their mental health outcomes.

Singh and Goel (2021) also compared coping mechanisms and psychological well-being between students from private and government universities. Their findings showed that government university students employed more problem-focused coping strategies, which contributed to better psychological well-being. In contrast, private university students showed a preference for emotion-focused coping, which was associated with varying levels of well-being.

Rani and Singh (2017) explored the relationship between coping mechanisms and psychological well-being in 120 university students. The study found a significant positive relationship between effective coping strategies, such as problem-solving, and higher psychological well-being. Private university students reported better well-being, likely due to better access to resources and support systems, compared to their government counterparts.

Sharma and Bhargava (2023) investigated the relationship between stress, coping, and well-being among 200 students from private and government universities. They found that adaptive coping mechanisms, such as active coping, were positively linked to well-being, while avoidant coping was negatively correlated with it. The study emphasizes the importance of fostering resilience-building programs in universities to help students better manage stress.

Ali and Kumari (2021) focused on the relationship between stress levels and coping mechanisms in college students. The study revealed that problem-focused coping was more effective in managing stress than emotion-focused or avoidant strategies. The researchers highlight the need for mental health interventions that encourage adaptive coping among students to reduce stress and improve psychological health.

Patel and Bansal (2023) studied how coping mechanisms mediate the relationship between stress and psychological well-being among young adults. They found that adaptive coping strategies, such as active coping and positive reframing, were positively associated with well-being, while maladaptive strategies, like denial, led to higher stress and poorer mental health.

Alam and Ali (2019) examined the role of social intelligence in adolescent psychological well-being. They found that adolescents with higher social intelligence demonstrated better psychological well-being, emphasizing the importance of developing social intelligence to support mental health.

Balasubramanian and Selvarani (2022) investigated how family climate influences adolescent well-being. Their study found that supportive family environments positively impacted psychological well-being, with female adolescents reporting slightly better well-being than males. The study highlights the importance of fostering positive family dynamics in promoting adolescent mental health.



Rafiq and Mehmood (2023) explored the relationship between coping mechanisms and well-being among 200 university students. They found a positive correlation between problem-focused coping and psychological well-being, while emotion-focused and avoidant strategies were negatively associated with well-being. The study advocates for promoting adaptive coping skills in university settings to enhance mental health.

Mehta and Goswami (2023) examined how stress and coping mechanisms impact the psychological well-being of emerging adults. They found that adaptive coping strategies were positively correlated with well-being, while maladaptive strategies like denial or substance use had a detrimental effect. The study emphasizes the need for interventions that promote healthy coping mechanisms in young adults.

Padma and Sujatha (2022) studied coping mechanisms among college students dealing with academic, social, and emotional stress. They found that students predominantly used productive coping strategies, but non-productive strategies like self-blame were also common, especially among female students. The research highlights the importance of institutional support to help students develop adaptive coping mechanisms.

Rani and Kalpana (2017) examined stress and psychological well-being in university students, finding that higher stress levels were linked to lower psychological well-being, particularly among female students. The study underscores the need for interventions to improve coping strategies and promote resilience among students.

Rationale of the Study

University students face numerous stressors, including academic demands, financial pressures, and social responsibilities. These stressors, if not effectively managed, can lead to serious mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and diminished overall well-being. Understanding how coping mechanisms—problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant—affect stress management and mental health is crucial for developing tailored interventions. For instance, Khurshed and Siddiqui (2022) found that university students experienced heightened anxiety, depression, and stress, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the need for targeted mental health support systems for students navigating academic and social disruptions.

Additionally, Sivakumar and Jeganathan (2022) found that adaptive coping mechanisms, such as problem-focused coping, were associated with improved psychological well-being, while maladaptive strategies like avoidance correlated with poorer mental health outcomes. This suggests that the way students cope with stress plays a pivotal role in their mental health, but the full scope of how different coping styles influence students across various contexts still requires further exploration.

This study aims to explore the relationship between stress, coping mechanisms, and psychological well-being in university students, with a specific focus on how problem-focused,



emotion-focused, and avoidant coping strategies impact students' ability to manage stress. Additionally, the study will consider the role of gender, academic discipline, and institutional environment in shaping the effectiveness of these coping strategies.

The findings of this research will provide valuable insights for university administrators, educators, and mental health professionals, helping them develop more effective support systems to address students' coping needs. By promoting adaptive coping strategies, universities can enhance students' psychological resilience and well-being, fostering healthier academic environments and improving both mental health and academic performance.

Methodology

This research aimed to explore the relationship between stress levels, coping strategies, and psychological well-being among university students. A quantitative research approach was utilized to examine how various coping mechanisms affect stress and psychological well-being. The study focused on three key coping styles: problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidant coping. The sample included 103 university students, aged 18 and older, enrolled in either private or government universities. A convenience sampling technique was used to select participants, ensuring a mix of both male and female students for gender diversity. To qualify for the study, participants needed to be currently enrolled in a university program and aged 18 or older. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before participation.

Objectives: The main goal of this research was to assess how coping strategies influence stress levels and psychological well-being in university students. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. **O1:** Investigate the impact of various coping strategies (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping) on stress levels among university students.
2. **O2:** Examine the effect of coping strategies on students' psychological well-being.

Hypotheses

1. **H1:** Different coping mechanisms (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping) will significantly predict stress levels in university students, with problem-focused coping showing a negative correlation with stress and avoidant coping showing a positive correlation with stress.
2. **H2:** Coping strategies (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping) will significantly predict psychological well-being, with problem-focused coping being positively linked to well-being, while emotion-focused and avoidant coping are negatively associated with well-being.



Instruments

Three established instruments were used to gather data:

1. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein in 1983, is a widely recognized self-report instrument designed to assess the extent to which individuals perceive their lives as stressful. This scale comprises 10 items that evaluate feelings and thoughts related to stress experienced over the past month. Respondents rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("Never") to 4 ("Very Often"). The cumulative score can range from 0 to 40, with higher scores indicating greater perceived stress. The scale includes both negatively worded items (e.g., "How often have you felt nervous and stressed?") and positively worded items (e.g., "How often have you felt that things were going your way?"). The positively worded items are reverse-scored to ensure that higher total scores consistently reflect higher levels of perceived stress. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the PSS-10 has been reported to range between .78 and .91, indicating good internal consistency.

2. Brief COPE Inventory

The Brief COPE, developed by Carver in 1997, is a 28-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess various coping strategies individuals employ in response to stress. It comprises 14 subscales, each consisting of two items, evaluating different coping mechanisms. These subscales can be grouped into three primary coping styles:

- **Problem-Focused Coping:** Active coping, planning, use of instrumental support, and positive reframing.
- **Emotion-Focused Coping:** Use of emotional support, acceptance, humor, religion, venting, and self-blame.
- **Avoidant Coping:** Self-distraction, denial, substance use, and behavioral disengagement.

Respondents rate each item 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"). To calculate scores for each coping style, the relevant subscale scores are summed and then averaged, yielding a mean score that reflects the frequency of use for that coping strategy. The Cronbach's alpha for the subscales ranges from .50 to .90 depending on the dimension, with most adaptive coping subscales showing acceptable to good reliability.

3. Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB-18)

The 18-item version of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB-18), developed by Carol Ryff in the late 1980s, is a concise self-report instrument designed to assess six core dimensions of psychological well-being:

- **Autonomy:** The sense of self-determination and independence.



- **Environmental Mastery:** The ability to manage and control one's environment.
- **Personal Growth:** The ongoing development of one's potential.
- **Positive Relations with Others:** The capacity for warm, trusting interpersonal relationships.
- **Purpose in Life:** The sense of meaning and direction in life.
- **Self-Acceptance:** A positive attitude toward oneself.

Each dimension is represented by three items, with responses rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Higher scores indicate greater levels of well-being. Reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the PWB-18 range from .70 to .89, indicating satisfactory internal consistency across domains.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted online via Google Forms, ensuring easy access and compliance with social distancing protocols. The survey was distributed over two weeks to a diverse group of students, with each participant completing the survey in a single session. Participants filled out the PSS-10, the Brief COPE Inventory, and the PWB-18, which together assessed stress levels, coping mechanisms, and psychological well-being.

Results

This section outlines the key findings of the study examining how coping mechanisms relate to stress levels and psychological well-being in university students. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, followed by correlation analysis to explore associations between the variables. Two linear regression analyses were then conducted to determine the predictive impact of coping mechanisms on stress and well-being. Results are presented below with supporting tables.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed for each main variable: perceived stress (PSS-10), coping mechanisms (Brief COPE), and psychological well-being (PWB-18). The results are presented in Table 1.

Table-1

Descriptive Statistics for Main Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum	N
Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)	19.20	4.63	8	30	103
Brief COPE (Coping Mechanisms)	66.00	9.41	44	89	103

Psychological Well-Being (PWB-18)	84.50	14.10	47	112	103
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As shown in Table 1, participants reported moderate levels of perceived stress ($M = 19.20$, $SD = 4.63$). The average psychological well-being score was relatively high ($M = 84.50$, $SD = 14.10$), indicating a generally healthy state of well-being among participants. Coping scores ($M = 66.00$, $SD = 9.41$) were within a moderate range, suggesting that participants used a variety of coping strategies.

Correlational Analysis

To explore the associations between stress, coping mechanisms, and psychological well-being, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table-2

Correlation Between Stress, Coping Mechanisms, and Psychological Well-Being

Variables	1	2	3
1. Perceived Stress (PSS-10)	—		
2. Coping Mechanisms (Brief COPE)	0.120	—	
3. Psychological Well-Being (PWB-18)	-0.175	-0.010	—

$p > .05$ for all correlations.

The correlation between perceived stress and psychological well-being was weakly negative ($r = -0.175$, $p = .076$), suggesting that higher stress may be associated with lower psychological well-being. However, this relationship was **not statistically significant**. Similarly, coping mechanisms showed a weak positive correlation with stress ($r = 0.120$, $p = .227$) and virtually no correlation with psychological well-being ($r = -0.010$, $p = .924$). These results indicate that there were **no significant linear associations** between the variables.

Linear Regression: Coping Mechanisms as a Predictor of Stress

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to assess whether coping mechanisms significantly predicted perceived stress. The model summary and coefficients are presented in Table 3.

Table-3*Regression of Stress on Coping Mechanisms*

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	R ²
Intercept	15.26	3.24	4.70	< .001	
Coping Mechanisms	0.059	0.049	1.22	0.227	0.014

The regression model was **not statistically significant**, $F(1, 101) = 1.50$, $p = .227$, indicating that coping mechanisms did not significantly predict perceived stress. The R^2 value was 0.014, meaning that only **1.4% of the variance** in stress scores could be explained by coping mechanisms.

Linear Regression: Coping Mechanisms as a Predictor of Psychological Well-Being

A second regression analysis was conducted to examine whether coping mechanisms predicted psychological well-being. The model summary is shown in Table 4.

Table-4*Regression of Psychological Well-Being on Coping Mechanisms*

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	R ²
Intercept	85.40	9.98	8.56	< .001	
Coping Mechanisms	-0.014	0.150	-0.096	0.924	<0.001

This model was also **not statistically significant**, $F(1, 101) = 0.01$, $p = .924$. The R^2 value was less than 0.001, indicating that coping mechanisms accounted for **virtually none of the variance** in psychological well-being.

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the relationship between coping mechanisms, stress levels, and psychological well-being among university students. Specifically, the research sought to determine whether coping strategies—namely, problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping—could significantly predict students' levels of perceived stress and their psychological well-being. Although existing literature has often highlighted coping mechanisms as important tools for managing stress and maintaining psychological health, the findings from this study did not support those expectations.

The results revealed that there were no statistically significant correlations between coping mechanisms and either perceived stress or psychological well-being. Descriptive statistics indicated that students in the sample generally reported moderate levels of stress and coping, along with relatively high psychological well-being. However, when analyzing the relationships between variables, the correlations were weak and nonsignificant. Specifically, coping mechanisms were not significantly associated with perceived stress or with psychological well-being. Similarly, the weak negative correlation between stress and psychological well-being did not reach statistical significance.

Furthermore, linear regression analyses were conducted to assess whether coping mechanisms could predict stress and psychological well-being. The results showed that coping mechanisms explained only 1.4% of the variance in stress levels and virtually none of the variance in psychological well-being. These findings suggest that coping mechanisms, at least when measured as an overall score using the Brief COPE inventory, may not serve as reliable predictors of either stress or psychological well-being in this particular sample.

The findings of this study contrast with several previous studies that have reported significant associations between coping styles and mental health outcomes. For example, Khursheed and Siddiqui (2022) observed heightened stress, anxiety, and depression among students during the COVID-19 pandemic and emphasized the importance of effective coping strategies for emotional adjustment. Similarly, Sivakumar and Jeganathan (2022) found that adaptive coping strategies, such as problem-focused coping, were linked to higher levels of psychological well-being, while maladaptive strategies like avoidance were associated with poorer mental health.

In the present study, however, coping mechanisms—whether adaptive or maladaptive—did not show a meaningful impact on stress or well-being. One possible explanation for this discrepancy could be that the use of a general coping score may have masked the effects of specific coping strategies. In other words, analyzing coping as a total score rather than examining individual subscales (e.g., active coping, denial, seeking emotional support) may have diluted the impact of coping styles that are more strongly related to psychological outcomes.

Implications

The findings of this study provide meaningful insights into how coping mechanisms, stress levels, and psychological well-being are related among university students. While no significant relationships were found between coping strategies and stress or well-being, these results suggest several important considerations for both future research and practice.

One key takeaway is that coping mechanisms, as assessed by the Brief COPE inventory, may not directly predict stress or psychological well-being. This suggests that a broad focus on coping alone, without examining the specific coping strategies employed by students, may not



fully capture how they manage stress or maintain mental health. Future studies should consider exploring the impact of specific coping styles, such as problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping, on stress and well-being. A more granular approach, examining these individual coping strategies, could offer a clearer understanding of how particular types of coping contribute to mental health outcomes.

In terms of practical applications, the results of this study highlight the need for interventions that aim to reduce stress and enhance psychological well-being. However, given the lack of significant associations between coping and the outcomes measured here, it is clear that other factors—such as personality traits, social support, and environmental stressors—likely play a more substantial role in shaping stress levels and well-being. University counseling services and mental health programs may benefit from taking a more holistic approach that addresses a range of influences on student mental health. This could include not only coping strategies but also social support, lifestyle factors, and academic pressures, all of which can significantly impact students' overall mental health.

Another important point is that the study's use of a single, overall coping score may have oversimplified the complex nature of coping behaviors. The coping mechanisms included in the Brief COPE inventory encompass a wide range of strategies, and it's possible that some of these strategies—such as active coping or seeking emotional support—may be more strongly linked to mental health outcomes than others. Future research could benefit from refining the coping scales to better differentiate between adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. Additionally, longitudinal studies would be valuable in understanding how coping behaviors evolve over time and influence mental health, especially as students' progress through different stages of their academic careers.

Finally, the results underscore the importance of acknowledging the diversity of coping responses within student populations. Despite the wide range of coping strategies reported by participants, no significant impact on mental health outcomes was observed in this study. This suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to coping interventions may not be effective. Instead, more personalized, context-sensitive interventions should be developed, taking into account the individual coping styles of students and their unique needs.

This study did not find significant evidence that coping mechanisms predict stress or psychological well-being, the results provide valuable direction for future research. It is crucial to continue exploring the role of specific coping strategies and other contributing factors in students' mental health. Mental health professionals and university support services should consider these complexities when designing effective interventions and support programs aimed at promoting the well-being of students.



Limitations and Future Research

This study has several important limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. One primary limitation is the cross-sectional design, which makes it challenging to establish cause-and-effect relationships. Since data were collected at only one point in time, we cannot conclude whether coping mechanisms influence stress and psychological well-being, or if higher stress leads to the use of certain coping strategies. Future research would benefit from a longitudinal approach to track how these factors evolve over time and how they interact. Another limitation is the use of a generalized coping score derived from the Brief COPE inventory. This score combines multiple coping strategies into one, potentially oversimplifying the complexity of coping behaviors. Future studies should investigate the individual coping strategies, such as problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, to better understand their specific effects on stress and well-being. This would allow for a more nuanced view of how different strategies impact mental health.

The sample of university students is also a limitation, as it represents a specific demographic that faces unique stressors. The challenges faced by university students may differ from those encountered by working adults or individuals from other cultural or age groups. Therefore, caution should be used when generalizing the findings to broader populations. It would be beneficial for future studies to include more diverse samples, including individuals from different age groups, cultures, or life stages, to determine if these findings are applicable to other groups.

Additionally, the reliance on self-report measures introduces potential biases, such as social desirability or inaccurate self-assessment. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of coping behaviors, future research could incorporate alternative data collection methods, such as interviews or behavioral observations. These methods may provide more reliable insights into coping strategies and their real-world application. Longitudinal studies could offer valuable insights into how coping mechanisms evolve over time, particularly as students' progress through different academic and personal life stages. These studies could explore the long-term effects of coping strategies on stress and psychological well-being. Focusing on specific coping strategies, rather than a generalized coping score, could help clarify which strategies are most effective in managing stress and improving well-being.

Future research should also consider expanding the sample diversity by including individuals from different backgrounds, life experiences, and cultural contexts. Comparing university students to other groups—such as working professionals or older adults—could offer additional insights into whether the patterns observed in this study are consistent across various populations. Finally, it is important to explore other factors that might influence the relationship between coping mechanisms and mental health, such as social support, personality traits, or environmental stressors. Understanding how these factors act as moderators or mediators could help explain why some coping strategies are more effective than others in managing stress and



promoting psychological well-being. This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between coping mechanisms, stress, and psychological well-being among university students, further research is needed. Future studies should use more specific measures of coping, include more diverse samples, and incorporate alternative methods of assessment. This will help develop a deeper understanding of how coping strategies influence mental health outcomes over time.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how different coping mechanisms relate to stress levels and psychological well-being among university students. Interestingly, the results did not support previous research that often links certain coping strategies—whether problem-focused, emotion-focused, or avoidant—to stress or mental health outcomes. While students reported moderate levels of stress and coping, and relatively high psychological well-being overall, the coping strategies they used did not significantly predict their mental health status.

One possible reason for this could be the use of broad coping categories. By grouping coping methods into general types, the subtle effects of individual strategies may have been overlooked. For instance, problem-focused coping is typically associated with better outcomes, but its unique impact might have been diluted in the combined score. Future studies may benefit from analyzing specific coping behaviors individually to gain a clearer picture of their roles in student well-being.

The study's design also comes with limitations. As a cross-sectional study, it captures a snapshot in time, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions about cause and effect. Additionally, because the sample consisted solely of university students, the findings may not apply to other groups. Expanding future research to include more diverse populations and adopting longitudinal designs could provide deeper insights into how coping evolves and impacts mental health over time.

Moreover, relying solely on self-reported data introduces potential bias, as participants' responses may not fully reflect their actual coping experiences. Integrating qualitative methods—like interviews or observational approaches—could offer richer, more nuanced understandings of how students manage stress in their daily lives. Overall, while this study contributes to the growing body of work on student mental health, it highlights the importance of taking a more detailed and individualized approach. Future research should aim to unpack specific coping behaviors, explore contextual influences, and ultimately support the development of more tailored and effective mental health interventions for students.

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