

Athens Institute for Education and Research

ATINER



ATINER's Conference Paper Series

EDU2012-0130

**Determining Coping Styles of
University Students with Stress**

Rumeysa Akgun, Msc

Ankara University

Faculty of Health Sciences Department of Social Work

Turkey

Gozde Terekli, Msc

Ankara University

Faculty of Health Sciences Department of Health Services Management

Turkey

Ece Ugurluoglu, PhD

Ankara University

Faculty of Health Sciences Department of Health Services Management

Turkey

Ozgur Ugurluoglu, PhD

Hacettepe University

Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences

Department of Health Administration

Turkey

Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209
Email: info@atiner.gr URL: www.atiner.gr
URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm

Printed in Athens, Greece by the Athens Institute for Education and Research.
All rights reserved. Reproduction is allowed for non-commercial purposes if the source is
fully acknowledged.

ISSN 2241-2891

7/09/2012

An Introduction to ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. The papers published in the series have not been refereed and are published as they were submitted by the author. The series serves two purposes. First, we want to disseminate the information as fast as possible. Second, by doing so, the authors can receive comments useful to revise their papers before they are considered for publication in one of ATINER's books, following our standard procedures of a blind review.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

This paper should be cited as follows:

Akgun, R., Terekli, G., Ugurluoglu, E. and Ugurluoglu, O. (2012) "**Determining Coping Styles of University Students with Stress**" Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: EDU2012-0130.

Determining Coping Styles of University Students with Stress

Rumeysa Akgun, Msc
Ankara University
Faculty of Health Sciences Department of Social Work
Turkey

Gozde Terekli, Msc
Ankara University
Faculty of Health Sciences Department of Health Services Management
Turkey

Ece Ugurluoglu, PhD
Ankara University
Faculty of Health Sciences Department of Health Services Management
Turkey

Ozgur Ugurluoglu, PhD
Hacettepe University
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences
Department of Health Administration
Turkey

Abstract

The population of the research consisted of 1601 students, no sampling method was performed and the study was conducted on 1062 students studying at six different departments (Child Development, Health Services Management, Midwifery, Nursing, Nutrition and Dietetics, Social Work) of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Ankara University, in February 2012. By this way, in total 66% of the students were reached and evaluated.

In the research, personal information form and “Ways of Coping Inventory” developed by Folkman and Lazarus (1984) and translated into Turkish by Sahin and Durak (1995) were used. The inventory consists of five dimensions. Data was collected by the researchers using a survey method.

When the descriptive findings are analyzed, it is seen that 82.4% of the students are female, 29.8% of the students are in their first year of the university, 31.5% are in the second year, 25.2% are in the third year and 13.5% are in the last year of the university. The results show that significant differences have been found on the dimension of self-confident approach according to gender ($p=0.000$), age ($p=0.015$), department ($p=0.000$), year of study ($p=0.033$) and number of books read in a year ($p=0.001$); significant differences have been found on the dimension of unconfident self approach according to age ($p=0.012$) and type of family ($p=0.004$); significant difference has been found on the dimension of submissive approach according to type of family ($p=0.031$); significant differences have been found on the dimension of optimistic approach according to gender ($p=0.000$), number of siblings ($p=0.029$) and

number of books read in a year ($p=0.006$); and significant difference has been found on the dimension of seeking social support according to the department ($p=0.023$).

Keywords: Ways of coping, university students, stress

Contact Information of Corresponding author:

INTRODUCTION

Stress can be described as a result of disturbed relationship between the person and the environment. Stress, which emerges as response of the body to a situation threatening physically and psychologically is considered to be an ordinary part of daily life. So everyone experiences stress sometime or another in their lives. Usually it refers to a feeling of physical or emotional tension and is often a response to change. It is a feeling of being unable to cope with anxiety, discomfort and the demands of a particular situations (Vijayashree and Mund, 2011).

Lazarus (2000) expresses stress as a complex, multidimensional negative emotion. Bolger and Zuckerman (1995) divided the stress process into two fundamental stages: stressor exposure and stressor reactivity. Exposure refers to the extent to which an individual experiences a stressful event. Reactivity refers to the extent to which an individual shows an emotional or physical reaction to a stressful event.

Coping is described as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands that are appraised as exceeding the resources of a person (Folkman and Lazarus, 1984). University students especially who has just registered to the institution face different kinds of sources of stress, such as the pressure of success, uncertain future, changes in their lives and difficulties envisaged for integration into the system. These students may also face social, emotional and physical and family problems which may affect their learning ability and academic performance (Zurilla and Sheedy, 1991; Fish and Nies, 1996; Chew-Graham et al., 2003; Towbes and Cohen, 1996). Changes in their lives while some of the students find it hard to cope with the stress others see the pressure as challenge to work harder. The strength of stress experienced is influenced by the students ability in using effective coping strategies in stressful situations (Zurilla and Sheedy, 1991).

There are a number of factors which enable some people to experience stress and cope more effectively than others. Some of these are structural features of the individuals' social environment, some are personality characteristics, and some are acquired coping strategies (Tyler and Ellison, 1994). Social support plays a role in positive coping with stress (Linley and Joseph, 2004).

It is the universal attitude to use certain coping attitudes in order to minimize or completely eliminate the adverse effects of stress-causing events or factors. Coping with stress refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral effort shown to eliminate the requirements and difficulties caused by the inner and outer world of the individual, keeping them under control, and minimizing tension. The attitude used by the individual to cope with stress may change depending on various factors such as age, gender, culture, illness and is specific to the individual (Kilic et al., 2011). The aim of this study is to determine the coping styles of Ankara University, Faculty of Health Sciences students with stress.

METHODS

Study Sample

The population of the research consisted of 1601 students, no sampling method was performed and the study was conducted on 1062 students studying at six different

departments (Child Development, Health Services Management, Midwifery, Nursing, Nutrition and Dietetics, Social Work) of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Ankara University, in February 2012. By this way, in total 66% of the students were reached and evaluated.

Materials

In the research, personal information form and “Ways of Coping Inventory” developed by Folkman and Lazarus (1984) and translated into Turkish by Sahin and Durak (1995) were used. It consists of 30 items and each item is rated on a 0-3 point ranging from “I have not been doing this at all (score 0)” to “I have been doing this exactly (score 3)”. The inventory consists of five dimensions. These are self-confident approach (8,10,14,16,20,23,26), unconfident self-approach (3,7,11,19,22,25,27,28), submissive approach (5,13,15,17,21,24), optimistic approach (2,4,6,12,18) and seeking social support (1,9,29,30). Scores are calculated separately for each dimensions and total score is not calculated. Increasing in scores of subscale is interpreted as a coping method used by individuals more. The scale’s coefficient alpha is 0.688.

Data Analysis

Data was collected by the researchers using a survey method in February 2012. The survey includes socio-demographic and personal information such as age, gender, departments of students, the year of university, number of siblings, place of/with residing, type of family and number of books read in a year. Students were assured that participation would be voluntary and confidential and would not affect their academic success.

Statistical data analysis was performed using SPSS version 15.0. The homogeneity of the data was tested with Levene Test Statistic. *t* test for independent samples and one-way ANOVA were used for homogenous data to compare the mean values of all dimensions of coping stress in relation to studied variables. For the non homogenous data, Kruskal Wallis and Mann-Whitney U Test were used. $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

For those who can cope with stress scores higher on confident and optimistic approaches and for those who cannot cope with stress scores higher on unconfident and submissive approaches (Kaya et al., 2007).

RESULTS**Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of Participants**

Variable	Type	n	%
Age (years) (n=1061)	17-20	522	49.2
	21-24	516	48.6
	≥ 25	23	2.2
Gender (n=1060)	Female	873	82.4
	Male	187	17.6
Department (n=1058)	Child Development	88	8.3
	Health Services Management	162	15.3
	Midwifery	221	20.9
	Nursing	256	24.2
	Nutrition and Dietetics	171	16.2
	Social Work	160	15.1
The Year of University (n=1057)	Freshman	317	30
	Sophomore	334	31.6
	Junior	268	24.4
	Senior	138	13.1
Number of Siblings (n=1059)	an only child	108	10.2
	1	345	32.6
	2	296	28
	≥ 3	310	29.3
Place of/with Residing (n=1056)	Living with Family	195	18.5
	Staying in Students' Dormitory	534	50.6
	with Relatives	28	2.7
	with Friends	299	28.3
Type of Family (n=1055)	Nuclear Family	901	85.4
	Extended Family	154	14.6
Number of Books Read in a Year (n=973)	0-5	297	30.5
	6-10	287	29.5
	11-15	164	16.9
	16-20	73	7.5
	≥ 21	152	15.6

As it is seen in Table 1, 82.4% of the students are female, 50.6% of the students stay in a students' dormitory, 85.4% of the students grew up in a nuclear family. The participants were grouped into the following three age categories: 49.2% of the students were in the range of 17-20 years old, 48.6% of the students were in the range of 21-24 years old and 2.2% were 25 years and more. The most participation in the study (24.2%) was provided by the students of the Department of Nursing and the least participation (8.3%) was provided by the students of the Department of Child Development. This is because of the fact that the Department of Nursing has the most number of students while the Department of Child Development has the least number of students in the faculty. In the faculty, 30 % of the students were freshman, 31.6 %

were sophomore, 25.4 % were junior and 13.1 % were senior. 10.2% of the students that participated in the study were an only child in the family, and 29.3 % of the students had three or more sisters/brothers. The percentage of students reading in the range of 0-5 books in a year was 30.5%.

Table 2. The Distribution of Coping with Stress Scores

Scales	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Self-Confident Approach	12.97	3.83	1	21
Unconfident Self Approach	8.87	4.08	0	24
Submissive Approach	4.70	2.77	0	15
Optimistic Approach	7.93	2.94	0	15
Seeking Social Support	6.25	1.77	0	12

Among coping with stress, self-confident approach score mean (12.97±3.83) of students was the highest followed by the unconfident self approach score mean (8.87±4.08), the optimistic approach score mean (7.93±2.94), seeking social support score mean (6.25±1.77) and the submissive approach score mean (4.70±2.77) (see Table 2).

Table 3. Mean Distributions and Differences of Five Dimensions

Dimensions			Self-confident Approach	Unconfident Self Approach	Submissive Approach	Optimistic Approach	Seeking Social Support
Age Groups	17-20	Mean	12.86	9.01	4.68	7.90	6.26
		SD	3.71	4.00	2.59	2.90	1.69
	21-24	Mean	12.97	8.83	4.78	7.91	6.21
		SD	3.90	4.13	2.94	2.99	1.81
	≥ 25	Mean	15.22	6.25	3.39	8.96	6.83
		SD	4.20	4.25	2.73	2.72	2.52
	F/KW		F= 4.197	F= 4.459	F= 2.775	F= 1.431	KW= 1.043
p		p= 0.015	p= 0.012	p= 0.063	p= 0.240	p= 0.594	
Gender	Female	Mean	12.73	8.95	4.68	7.71	6.25

		SD	3.87	4.07	2.73	2.92	1.75
		Mean	14.06	8.49	4.79	8.96	6.24
	Male	SD	3.42	4.13	2.98	2.83	1.91
	t/Z		Z=-4,081	t= 1.362	t= -0.501	t= -5.272	t= 0.091
	p		p= 0.000	p= 0.174	p= 0.617	p= 0.000	p= 0.928
Department	Child Development	Mean	12.90	8.89	4.84	8.16	6.41
		SD	4.07	3.91	2.64	3.14	1.63
	Health Services Management	Mean	14.17	8.60	4.33	8.41	6.69
		SD	3.53	3.72	3.01	3.25	1.77
	Midwifery	Mean	12.60	8.91	4.68	7.78	6.17
		SD	3.90	4.19	2.67	3.01	1.81
	Nursing	Mean	12.75	8.82	4.86	7.84	6.19
		SD	3.58	3.95	2.79	2.80	1.69
	Nutrition and Dietetics	Mean	12.39	9.30	5.05	7.60	6.09
		SD	4.00	4.29	2.64	3.03	1.81
	Social Work	Mean	13.25	8.70	4.33	8.06	6.16
		SD	3.84	4.38	2.81	2.45	1.79
F/KW		F= 4.572	F= 0.563	F= 1.854	KW= 6.685	F= 2.612	
p		p= 0.000	p= 0.729	p= 0.100	p= 0.245	p= 0.023	
The Year of University	Freshman	Mean	13.36	9.12	4.70	8.21	6.40
		SD	3.76	4.02	2.57	2.95	1.70
	Sophomore	Mean	12.66	8.98	4.82	7.85	6.26
		SD	3.68	4.06	2.75	2.84	1.56
	Junior	Mean	12.66	8.47	4.62	7.67	6.13
		SD	4.04	4.13	2.78	2.85	2.09
	Senior	Mean	13.42	8.77	4.45	7.93	6.15
		SD	3.85	4.20	3.16	3.26	1.73
	F/KW		F= 2.934	F= 1.285	F= 0.604	KW= 5.384	KW=6.236
	p		p= 0.033	p= 0.278	p= 0.613	p= 0.146	p= 0.101
Number	an only	Mea	13.01	7.99	4.23	7.34	6.13

of Siblings	child	n					
		SD	4.16	4.09	2.46	3.38	1.90
	1	Mea n	12.94	9.17	4.76	7.79	6.18
		SD	3.46	3.95	2.74	2.77	1.70
	2	Mea n	13.02	8.97	4.73	8.15	6.31
		SD	4.10	3.89	2.66	3.10	1.72
	≥ 3	Mea n	12.92	8.72	4.73	8.07	6.31
		SD	3.85	4.35	2.97	2.79	1.87
	F/KW		KW=0.21 0	F= 2.438	KW= 3.182	KW= 9.0 27	F= 0.571
p		p= 0.976	p= 0.063	p= 0.364	p= 0.029	p= 0.634	
Place of/with Residing	Living with Family	Mea n	12.75	8.92	4.66	7.70	6.12
		SD	3.96	4.21	2.79	3.11	1.81
	Living in Student's Hostel	Mea n	13.04	8.89	4.61	7.99	6.18
		SD	3.65	3.86	2.68	2.82	1.68
	with Relatives	Mea n	13.38	9.00	4.92	8.07	6.54
		SD	4.09	4.34	2.43	2.81	1.55
	with Friends	Mea n	12.89	8.76	4.85	7.97	6.41
		SD	4.02	4.27	2.95	3.06	1.92
	F/KW		F= 0.411	KW=0.50 4	F= 0.521	F= 0.496	F= 1.653
p		p= 0.745	p= 0.918	p= 0.668	p= 0.685	p= 0.175	
Type of Family	Nuclear Family	Mea n	13.00	8.73	4.61	7.92	6.23
		SD	3.82	3.99	2.72	2.95	1.76
	Extended Family	Mea n	12.74	9.79	5.14	8.00	6.37
		SD	3.91	4.45	2.90	2.96	1.84
	t		t= 0.794	t= -2.905	t= -2.159	t= -0.350	t= -0.852
p		p= 0.428	p= 0.004	p= 0.031	p= 0.726	p= 0.395	
Number of Books	0-5	Mea n	12.58	9.03	4.83	7.47	6.11

	SD	3.83	3.95	2.73	2.74	1.76
6-10	Mea n	12.46	8.93	4.86	7.90	6.17
	SD	3.69	4.06	2.66	3.05	1.69
11-15	Mea n	13.23	8.87	4.82	8.33	6.49
	SD	3.48	4.33	2.72	2.64	1.73
16-20	Mea n	13.73	8.46	4.46	8.33	6.32
	SD	3.22	4.01	2.60	2.71	1.76
≥ 21	Mea n	13.84	8.32	4.14	8.09	6.28
	SD	4.33	4.05	3.09	3.30	1.97
F/KW		KW=18.8 86	F=0.921	F=2.088	KW=14.5 08	F=1.354
p		p= 0.001	p=0.451	p=0.080	p=0.006	p= 0.248

According to Table 3, there was a statistically significant difference on self-confident approach ($p=0.015$) and unconfident self approach ($p=0.012$) based on age of the participants. The self-confident approach score mean was the highest for students whose age were 25 and over (15.22 ± 4.20). While the unconfident self approach score mean was the highest score for students whose age range were 17-20 (9.01 ± 4.00); the students' whose age were 25 and over score mean was the least (6.25 ± 4.25).

There was no significant difference in the unconfident self approach, submissive approach and seeking social support score means based on gender. There was a statistically significant difference on self-confident approach ($p=0.000$) and optimistic approach ($p=0.000$) based on gender. The self-confident approach (14.06 ± 3.42) and optimistic approach (8.96 ± 2.83) score means were higher for male students.

There was a statistically significant difference on self-confident approach ($p=0.000$) and seeking social support ($p=0.023$) based on departments of students. The self-confident approach (14.17 ± 3.53) and seeking social support (6.69 ± 1.77) score means were higher for students of Health Services Management. Score means of other dimensions were very close to each other.

There was a statistically significant difference on self-confident approach only ($p=0.033$) based on the year of the university. The self-confident approach score mean was the highest score for senior students (13.42 ± 3.85) and also it was the least score for both sophomore (12.66 ± 3.68) and junior students (12.66 ± 4.04).

There was a statistically significant difference on optimistic approach only ($p=0.029$) based on number of siblings. The optimistic approach score mean was the highest score for having two sisters/brothers (8.15 ± 3.10) and also it was the least score for an only child student (7.34 ± 3.38).

There were no statistically significant differences on all dimensions of coping with stress based on place of residing of participations.

There was a statistically significant difference on unconfident self approach ($p=0.004$) and submissive approach ($p=0.031$) based on type of family of participations. The

unconfident self approach (9.79 ± 4.45) and submissive approach (5.14 ± 2.90) score means were higher for students of having an extended family.

There was a statistically significant difference on self-confident approach ($p=0.001$) and optimistic approach ($p=0.006$) based on number of books reading by participation in a year. The self-confident approach score mean was the highest score for students reading 21 and more books a year (13.84 ± 4.33) and the least score for students reading range of 6-10 books a year (12.46 ± 3.69). According to optimistic approach score mean, the highest score belonged to both students reading books the range of 11-15 in a year (8.33 ± 2.64) and the range of 16-20 (8.33 ± 2.71); the least score belonged to students reading books the range of 0-5 in a year (7.47 ± 2.74).

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

In coping with stress, self-confident approach score mean (12.97 ± 3.83) of students was the highest among all others. Other studies also report similar results on students mostly using self-confident and optimistic approaches when they are faced with stress (Guler and Cinar 2010; Tasgin and Caglayan, 2011).

According to our results there was a statistically significant difference on self-confident approach according to gender and age. The score means were higher for male students and for students whose ages were 25 and over. Guler and Cinar (2010) found that male students scored higher on submissive approach than female students and Kaya et al. (2007) found that Vocational School of Health students mostly use submissive approach to cope with their stress. In another study, it was found that the university students did not differ in the levels of using such coping mechanisms as long as age and gender were concerned (Tasgin and Caglayan, 2011). On the other side gender differences in the use of coping strategies have been reported that females tend to favor social support, emotion focused and avoidant coping strategies relative to males (Ptacek et al., 1992; Stein and Nyamathi, 1999).

Similar to Guler and Cinar's study the self-confident approach score mean was the least score for sophomores. It can be stated that sophomore students give up coping with stress and tend to favor submissive approach and social support.

Students may face many factors causing stress during their educational process. If students experience stress and they cannot manage it properly, this may affect their academic performance but stress cannot be predicted in their lives from any single variable like gender, the year of university, age, number of siblings, books read in a year etc...

'Stress management' and 'Time management' taught along with the curricula may assist students in dealing with stress due to study loads (Lee and Graham, 2001). A study showed that those who did not know how to use coping strategies to handle stress would experience more stressful condition (Sunita and S. Ralf, 1994) than those who used coping strategies (Mosley et al., 1994).

Although some stress is necessary for personal growth to occur, the amount of stress should be taken under control in order for students to be successful. It is important for both the teaching staff and the students to understand the stressors of university students and the ways to cope with them.

REFERENCES

- Bolger , N., & Zuckerman , A. (1995). A framework for studying personality in the stress process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 5, 890–902.
- Chew-Graham, C.A., Rogers, A. & Yassin, N. (2003). ‘I wouldn’t want it on my CV or their records’ : Medical students’ experiences of help-seeking for mental health problems. *Medical Education*, 37, 873 – 880.
- Fish, C. & Nies, M.A. (1996). Health promotion needs of students in a college environment. *Public health Nursing*, 13, 104 – 111.
- Guler, O. & Cinar, S. 2010Determining To the Perceived Stressors and the Used Coping Strategies of the Nursing Department Students *Maltepe Üniversitesi Hemşirelik Bilim ve Sanatı Dergisi, Sempozyum Özel Sayısı [In Turkish]*
- Kaya M, Genc, M., Kaya, B. & Pehlivan, E. (2007) Prevalence of Depressive Symptoms, Ways of Coping, and Related Factors Among Medical School and Health Services Higher Education Students *Türk Psikiyatri Dergisi*; 18(2):137-146 [In Turkish]
- Kilic D, Erol G, Kilic B.(2011). The effect methods to cope with stress in high school students on hopelessness and self-esteem, *HealthMED* , 5 (6).
- Lazarus, R.S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal and coping*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Lazarus, R. S. (2000). Toward better research on stress and coping. *American Psychologist*, 55, 665-673.
- Lee, j. & Graham, A.V. (2001). Students’ perception of medical school stress and their evaluation of wellness elective. *Medical Education*, 35, 652 – 659.
- Linley, P. A., & Joseph, S. (Eds.). (2004). *Positive psychology in practice*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
- Mosley TH, Perrin SG Jr, Neral SM, Dubbert PM, Grothues CA and Pinto BM.(1994). Stress, coping and well being among third year medical students. *Academy Medicine* 69, 765 - 767 .
- Ptacek, J. T., Smith R. E., & Zanas, J. (1992). Gender, appraisal and coping: a longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Personality*, 60, 747-770.
- Stein, J. A., & Nyamathi, A. (1999). Gender differences in relationships among stress, coping and health risk behaviors in impoverished minority populations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 26, 141-157.
- Sunita M & Ralf S.(1994). Stability of coping in Hong Kong medical students: a longitudinal study. *Personality and Individual Differences*. Elsevier Science Ltd. 20(2), 245 - 255
- Tasgin O. &Caglayan, H.S. (2011) Evaluation of Ways of Coping Stress of the Students Who Studies at the Department of Physical Education and Sports7.Ulusal Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Öğretmenliği Kongresi 25-27 Mayıs 2011 VAN
- Towbes LC & Cohen LH. (1996).Chronic stress in the lives of college students: Scale development and prospective prediction of distress. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 199 - 217
- Tyler P A & Ellison R N (1994) *Journal of Advanced Nursmg* 19, 469-476 Sources of stress and psychological well-being in high-dependency Nursing

- Vijayashree & Mund (2011). Role Stress and Coping: a case in Iites company, Mustang Journal of Business & Ethics.
- Zurilla D TJ & Sheedy CF .(1991).Relation between social problem-solving ability and subsequent level of psychological stress in college students. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 61(5),841 - 846 (1991).