



STRESS COPING ABILITY AMONG INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Stress coping ability is an important factor in students' adjustment and educational well-being. The present study examined the stress coping ability of 500 Intermediate students in Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh. A survey method was adopted, and the students were selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the standardized Stress Coping Ability Scale and analyzed using percentage, mean, standard deviation, and independent-samples t-test. The findings showed that 52% of students had moderate, 27% high, and 21% low stress coping ability. No significant differences were found based on gender and locality, whereas significant differences were observed based on college management and academic stream. Government and Arts students recorded higher mean scores than their respective counterparts. The findings highlight the need to strengthen coping skills among Intermediate students for better adjustment and educational well-being.

Keywords: Stress Coping Ability; Intermediate Students; Stress Management; Coping Skills; Emotional Well-being; Educational Adjustment.



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Introduction

Stress is a common experience in human life and arises when individuals perceive that the demands placed upon them exceed their ability to respond effectively. During adolescence, students encounter various academic, social, and emotional challenges that can contribute to

stress. Intermediate education represents a crucial stage in the educational system, as students face increased academic workload, examination pressure, parental expectations, and concerns regarding higher education and future careers. These challenges make the ability to cope with stress an important factor in students' overall development and academic success. Stress coping ability refers to the capacity of an individual to manage, adapt to, and overcome stressful situations through appropriate cognitive, emotional, and behavioral strategies. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping involves the constantly changing efforts used to manage specific external and internal demands that are perceived as taxing or exceeding personal resources. Effective coping enables students to maintain emotional balance, solve problems constructively, and adjust successfully to academic demands.

The concept of stress coping ability is particularly significant among intermediate students because adolescence is a period of rapid physical, psychological, and social change. Students who possess effective coping skills are more likely to demonstrate resilience, self-confidence, and positive academic adjustment. Conversely, poor coping ability may result in anxiety, emotional distress, and reduced academic performance. Therefore, understanding stress coping ability among intermediate students is essential for promoting mental well-being, enhancing educational outcomes, and supporting healthy adolescent development (Compas et al., 2001; Frydenberg, 2008). Educational institutions play a vital role in strengthening students' coping abilities. Teachers, counsellors, and parents can support adolescents by fostering emotional awareness, effective study habits, time-management skills, and positive thinking. The development of these competencies not only enhances academic achievement but also contributes to psychological well-being and resilience. Against this background, the present study seeks to examine the stress coping ability of intermediate students and explore variations across selected demographic variables. The findings are expected to contribute to the field of Educational Psychology and provide useful insights for developing interventions that promote student well-being and academic success.

Need and Significance of the Study

The Intermediate stage is an important phase of students' education, involving academic responsibilities, examinations, career decisions, and expectations from parents and teachers. These demands may place students in stressful situations and require them to develop appropriate ways of managing them. Therefore, stress coping ability is an important aspect to

examine among Intermediate students. The need for the present study arises from the fact that students differ in how they respond to and manage stressful situations. While some may handle academic and personal pressures effectively, others may find it difficult to manage such experiences. Assessing stress coping ability can therefore provide a clearer understanding of students' responses to stress at this stage of education. The significance of the study is reflected in its examination of the capacity of Intermediate students to deal with stressful situations. The findings may indicate the level of stress coping ability among the students and highlight variations across selected background characteristics. This may provide a clearer understanding of how students manage stress during an important stage of their education. Thus, the present study seeks to provide a focused understanding of stress coping ability among Intermediate students during an important stage of their educational development.

Review of related Literature

Mathew et al. (2015) investigated stress and coping among school-going adolescents in Delhi. The study examined the stressful experiences faced by adolescents and the coping strategies they used to manage them. The findings showed that adolescents encountered stress arising from academic, family, and personal circumstances and responded through different coping strategies.

Priyanka A. Rao (2016) assessed coping strategies among adolescent girls, focusing on reducing avoidance-oriented coping and strengthening approach-oriented strategies. The study highlighted the use of constructive coping approaches in dealing with stressful experiences during adolescence. The findings suggest the importance of developing appropriate coping strategies among adolescents to manage stress effectively.

Adhiya-Shah and Trivedi (2017) Explored the relationship between stress, coping, and personality among school-going adolescents in Ahmedabad. The study reported that adolescents differed in their coping patterns in relation to personality characteristics. Both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping were identified, with variations in coping preferences also observed between boys and girls. The findings indicate that adolescents employ different coping approaches in responding to stressful experiences.

Chaware and Muniyandi (2018) analyzed study-related stress and coping ability among 50 higher secondary students in a selected junior college. The researchers assessed students' knowledge before and after a planned teaching programme on stress and coping. The findings

showed a significant improvement in post-test knowledge, suggesting that the teaching programme was effective in enhancing students' understanding of study-related stress and coping ability.

Parikh et al. (2019) examined stress and coping among school-going adolescents in urban India. The study identified academic pressure, parental expectations, peer influences, and social-environmental factors as important sources of stress. Adolescents reported using different ways of dealing with stress, including distraction, avoidance, and seeking emotional support. Emotion-focused coping was reported more frequently than problem-focused coping, and adolescents sought support from parents, teachers, and friends when facing stressful situations.

Fatma, T. (2020) studied stress-coping patterns among male and female adolescents. A sample of 300 adolescents was selected from six schools in Lucknow District. The study highlighted differences in the ways adolescents respond to and manage stressful experiences. The findings suggest that adolescents employ different coping approaches when dealing with stress, reflecting variation in their ability to manage stressful situations.

Statement of the Problem

Students differ in their ability to cope with stressful situations. Examining this ability among Intermediate students provides an understanding of how they manage stress during this stage of education. In view of this, the researcher undertook the present study to assess stress coping ability among Intermediate students. The problem selected for investigation is stated as follows: *“A Study of Stress Coping Ability among Intermediate Students.”*

Operational Definitions of the Study

- ***Stress Coping Ability:*** Stress coping ability refers to an individual's capacity to manage and respond effectively to stressful situations through appropriate cognitive, emotional, and behavioural strategies.
- ***Intermediate Students:*** In the present study, Intermediate students are defined as those enrolled in first-year or second-year Intermediate education (Classes XI and XII) in Government and Private junior colleges in Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the levels of stress coping ability among intermediate students.
- To examine the difference in stress coping ability between male and female Intermediate students.

- To examine the difference in stress coping ability between rural and urban Intermediate students.
- To examine the difference in stress coping ability between Intermediate students studying in Government and Private junior colleges.
- To examine the difference in stress coping ability between Intermediate students belonging to Arts and Science streams.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the stress coping ability of Intermediate students with respect to gender.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the stress coping ability of Intermediate students with respect to locality.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the stress coping ability of Intermediate students with respect to the type of college.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the stress coping ability of Intermediate students with respect to academic stream.

Methodology of the Study

The researcher adopted the survey method to study stress coping ability among Intermediate students in Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh. The sample comprised 500 first-year and second-year Intermediate students selected from Government and Private junior colleges through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the Stress Coping Ability Scale developed and standardised by S. Jegadha and R. Francisca (2014). The scale comprises 38 items, each rated on a five-point response scale, with a reported reliability coefficient of 0.74. The study considered gender, locality, type of college, and academic stream as the variables for comparison.

Statistical Techniques Used

The collected data were systematically scored, organized, and analyzed using percentage, mean, standard deviation, and independent-samples t-test. Percentage was used to describe the distribution of students, while mean and standard deviation indicated the average level and variability of stress coping ability. The independent-samples t-test was employed to determine the significance of differences in stress coping ability across the selected demographic and academic variables.

Analysis of the Data

Table-1
Levels of stress coping ability among Intermediate Students

Variable	Score Range	%	Level
Stress Coping ability	Low (≤ 106)	21%	Low
	Moderate (106–142)	52%	Moderate
	High (≥ 142)	27%	High

Table 1 shows that the majority of Intermediate students have a moderate level of stress coping ability (52%), followed by high (27%) and low (21%) levels. The distribution indicates that the students predominantly exhibit a moderate level of stress coping ability.

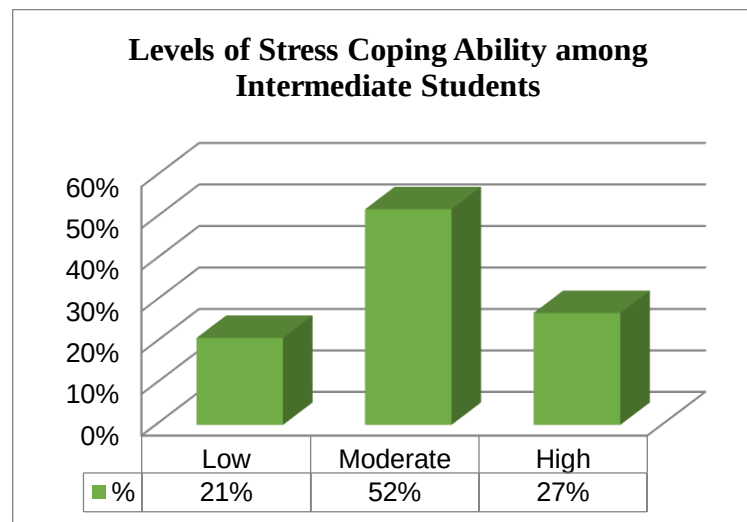


Table-2
Comparison of the Stress Coping Ability between Male and Female Intermediate Students

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Male	250	121.72	18.27	1.31 @
Female	250	123.85	17.86	

@ Not Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 presents the comparison of stress coping ability between male and female intermediate students. The mean score of male students is 121.72, while that of female students is 123.85. The calculated t-value (1.31) is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence,

the null hypothesis is accepted. It is concluded that there is no significant difference in the stress coping ability between male and female intermediate students.

Table-3
Comparison of the Stress Coping Ability between Rural and Urban Intermediate Students

Locality	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Rural	250	122.64	18.91	1.18@
Urban	250	124.57	17.35	

@ Not Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 indicates the comparison of stress coping ability between rural and urban intermediate students. The mean score of rural students is 122.64, while the mean score of urban students is 124.57. The calculated t-value (1.18) is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is concluded that there is no significant difference in the stress coping ability between rural and urban intermediate students.

Table-4
Comparison of Stress Coping Ability between Government and Private Intermediate Students

Management	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Government	250	126.76	17.97	2.62*
Private	250	122.35	19.52	

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4 illustrates the comparison of stress coping ability between government and private intermediate students. The mean score of Government students is 126.76, while that of private students is 122.35. The calculated t-value (2.62) is significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is concluded that there is a significant difference in stress coping ability between government and private intermediate students.

Table-5
Comparison of Stress Coping Ability between Arts and Science Intermediate Students

Academic Stream	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Arts	250	126.91	18.37	3.15 *
Science	250	121.54	19.64	

* Significant at 0.01 level

Table 5 depicts the comparison of stress coping ability between Arts and Science intermediate students. The mean score of Arts students is 126.91, while the mean score of science students is 121.54. The calculated t-value (3.15) is significant at the 0.01 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is concluded that there is a significant difference in the stress coping ability between Arts and Science intermediate students, indicating that Arts students have higher stress coping ability than Science students.

Findings of the Study

- The majority of Intermediate students (52%) have a moderate level of stress coping ability, followed by high (27%) and low (21%) levels.
- Male and female Intermediate students do not differ significantly in their stress coping ability.
- Rural and urban Intermediate students do not differ significantly in their stress coping ability.
- Government Intermediate students have significantly higher stress coping ability than private Intermediate students.
- Arts Intermediate students have significantly higher stress coping ability than Science Intermediate students.

Educational Implications: The findings of the present study have several important implications for educational practice, student well-being, and institutional support.

- Intermediate colleges should organize regular stress management programmes to help students develop effective coping strategies and strengthen their emotional well-being.
- Periodic assessment of students' stress levels and coping ability should be undertaken to identify students who may require timely guidance and support.
- Teachers should foster supportive classroom environments that encourage open communication, reduce unnecessary academic pressure, and help students approach challenges with confidence.
- Teacher development programmes should include training to recognize signs of student stress and adopt appropriate supportive teaching practices.
- Guidance and counselling services should be strengthened in Intermediate colleges to provide timely psychological and educational support to students experiencing stress.

- Workshops on stress management, emotional regulation, and emotional intelligence should be organized to equip students with practical skills for managing academic and personal demands.
- Life skills such as time management, problem-solving, decision-making, and emotional regulation should be integrated into educational programmes to strengthen students' coping ability.
- Colleges should promote participation in sports, yoga, meditation, cultural activities, and other constructive co-curricular and extracurricular activities that can support stress reduction and psychological resilience.
- Since significant differences were observed based on type of college management and academic stream, appropriate group-specific support programmes should be developed according to students' needs.
- Educational administrators should formulate student-support policies that give adequate attention to mental health and well-being alongside academic achievement, thereby promoting holistic development.
- Strengthening stress coping ability may contribute to students' academic adjustment, emotional stability, self-confidence, and overall personal well-being.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Intermediate students predominantly exhibit a moderate level of stress coping ability. No significant differences were found based on gender and locality, whereas significant differences were observed with respect to college management and academic stream. These findings highlight the need to strengthen students' coping skills to manage academic and personal stress effectively. Regular guidance, counselling, and stress management programmes can support students in developing appropriate coping strategies. Life skills education, including time management, problem-solving, decision-making, and emotional regulation, can further enhance coping ability. Particular attention should be given to students from private colleges and Science streams, who may require targeted interventions. Collaborative efforts among teachers, counsellors, parents, and educational administrators can promote student well-being. Strengthening stress coping ability can contribute to better adjustment, resilience, confidence, and academic well-being among Intermediate students.

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