SUMMARY

Adjustment is a psychological concept which generally refers to the behaviour that permits people to meet the demands of the environment (Rathus and Nevid, 1986). The multidimensional nature of adjustment, explain how individuals respond to the challenges of life or battle to manage their social and physical environment. To deal with life problems and challenges, which force an individual to exhibit diverse types of behaviours known as “coping.” According to Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) stress and coping model of adjustment, personality variables such as dispositional optimism are not considered to be the strongest determinants of situation specific coping or adjustment (McCrae and Costa, 1986). Rather, the investigators have argued that coping with a stressful situation is initially determined by appraisals regarding the encounter, which consequently influence and determine coping response and adjustment. Cognitive appraisal is a process in which an individual evaluates whether an encounter with the environment is relevant to his or her well being, (Lazarus, 1993). In the cognitive theory of stress and coping, the individual evaluations of encounters are considered as primary and secondary appraisals. Coping has two major functions i.e. regulation of emotions, and the handling of the problem that is causing the stress. Factors relating to personality plays important role in coping processes (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Researchers have investigated the relation between coping strategies and specific personality traits. Among the traits that have been included in studies are optimism (e.g., Carver, et al., 1993; Scheier, Weintraub and Carver, 1986), hardiness (e.g., Florian, Mikulincer and Taubman, 1995), self-esteem (e.g., Chapman and Mullis, 1999; Lane, Jones and Stevens, 2002), etc. There are researches e.g. (Mosher, Prelow, Chen and Yackel, 2006); Busari, (2013) and Chang, (1998) where depression was considered and conceptualized to be as psychological adjustment therefore in present study also depression and satisfaction with life is conceptualized as psychological adjustment. Life satisfaction (psychological adjustment in present study) is defined as a cognitive evaluation of an
individual’s life as a whole and or of specific life domains (Huebner et al., 2005; Myers and Diener, 1995). Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen and DeLongis, (1986) found that aggregated measures of appraisals and different types of coping strategies associated with stressful encounters were significantly related to the process of psychological and physical adjustment.

Limited studies have explored the interplay between sex differences, religious differences and coping strategies in Indian culture. With the increasing focus on cultural diversity and the need to understand individuals within their mainstream culture, the research has been conducted to minimize the gap in the literature and hopes to shed light on the diverse coping strategies utilized by both male and female adolescents living in India, and in turn how such selected strategies effect their adjustment and appraisals. Therefore the study “OPTIMISM AS PREDICTOR OF ADJUSTMENT: MEDIATING ROLE OF APPRAISALS AND COPING OF A STRESSOR” was planned.

The specific objectives of the study were:

Objectives

1. To examine the level of optimism, adjustment, coping and appraisals among students.
2. To examine the variations among students belonging to Hindu, Muslims, Sikh and Christians religion on optimism, adjustment, appraisals and coping of a stressor.
3. To examine the sex differences on optimism, adjustment, appraisals and coping of a stressor.
4. To examine the relationship between optimism and adjustment.
5. To identify the mediating role of primary and secondary appraisal in optimism and adjustment.
6. To identify the mediating role of coping between optimism and adjustment.
Hypotheses

1. There would be varied level of optimism, adjustment, coping and appraisals among students.

2. There would be significant variations among students belonging to Hindu, Muslims, Sikh and Christian’s religion on optimism, adjustment, appraisals and coping of a stressor.

3. There would be significant sex differences on optimism, adjustment, appraisals and coping of a stressor.

4. There would be significant relationship between optimism and adjustment.

5. There would be significant mediating role of primary and secondary appraisal in optimism and adjustment.

6. There would be significant mediating role of coping between optimism and adjustment.

Design

A correlational study design was used to study the relationship amongst the independent and criterion variables and for the identification of appraisals and coping in adjustment. A two and multigroup design was used to examine the religious and sex variations in adjustment, optimism, appraisal and coping.

Sample

A sample of 200 students was selected on the basis of non random purposive sampling, after pre-board examination of class 12th. The sample was taken from various cities across India such as Mumbai, Chandigarh and Rohtak. Age of the participants ranged from 16 years to 18 years. There were 100 males and 100 females with equal number of males and females in every religion. Data of 25 students were collected from Rohtak, 15 from Chandigarh and 160 from Mumbai on the basis of convenience.
Summary

Tools Used

1. Life Orientation Test- Revised (LOT-R) was used to measure optimism given by Scheier, Carver and Bridges (1994)
2. Self Appraisals was used to measure the appraisals given by Chang, (1998)
3. Brief COPE was used to measure the coping styles given by Carver, Scheier and Weintraub, (1989)
4. Beck Depression Inventory was used to measure depression given by Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Monk and Erbaugh, (1961)
5. Satisfaction With Life Scale was used to measure satisfaction of life given by Diener,(1985) and,
6. Pennebaker Inventory Of Limbic Languidness was used to measure the physical symptoms given by Pennebaker, (1982)

Procedure

A battery of tools was administered on 200 students from Haryana, Mumbai and Chandigarh after getting permission from schools but as it was crucial time for the students so the investigator searches out for the various societies (samaj), and administered the battery. The participants were told in advance, about the possible time involved in the study as this was the crucial time for the students. Instructions for each test were provided separately on the title page of each test. Following instructions were given. “I am going to give you a set of questionnaire in which questions regarding your own way to see life, yourself and how you behave during any stressful situation like your board exam.” In addition specific instructions for specific test/ scale were given at the time of administering it.

Scoring and Statistical Analysis

All the test/scale was scored according to scoring procedure given in their respective manuals. The obtained data were subjected to statistical analysis (both Descriptive and Inferential) by using SPSS software (version 20) for computation of Mean, Standard Deviation, 2×4 way ANOVA was used to find out significant
difference among religious groups and sex and their interactive effect was also calculated, correlation was used to find out the relationship between optimism and adjustment. Hierarchical regression analysis to find out the predictors of adjustment and Sobel’s test which is an online test was used to find out the mediating role of appraisals and coping between optimism and adjustment.

**Main Findings**

1. There are varied level of optimism, adjustment with majority of the students falling in moderate category i.e. (78%) in optimism and (88%) in adjustment. Similarly (76%) and (80%) students falling in moderate category in primary and secondary appraisal while in coping 73% students in moderate category.

2. Significant religious differences were found in optimism, physical adjustment, depression, satisfaction with life, primary appraisal and self distraction and venting, styles of coping strategy.

3. Significant sex differences was found in optimism, physical adjustment, depression, primary appraisal and denial, substance use, instrumental support, venting, acceptance, religion, styles of coping strategies.

4. Significant positive relation was found between optimism and satisfaction with life, optimism was also significantly negatively correlated with physical adjustment and depression.

5. Only secondary appraisal was found to play significant mediating role between optimism and psychological adjustment (satisfaction with life only).

6. Coping (Total) was found to play significant mediating role between optimism and psychological adjustment (both satisfaction with life and depression).