

Comparing Coping Styles and Social Adjustment of Employed and Unemployed Students in Golestan Province, Iran

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the study was to compare coping styles and social adjustment of employed and unemployed students in Golestan province. The population of this study was all the employed and unemployed students of Golestan University in 2014-2015 academic years. Using Morgan table, the sample population was estimated to be 380 individuals among whom were 95 employed female students, 95 unemployed female students, 95 employed male students and 95 unemployed male students. The participants were selected using available sampling. The data of the study was collected using Endler and Parker's coping styles questionnaire CISS (1990) and Weissman's social adjustment scale (SAS) (1999). Variance analysis and Duncan's post hoc test were used for analysis of the data and the results revealed that there was a significant difference between avoidance coping styles and emotion-centered coping of unemployed female students and other groups ($P<0.05$). According to the analyses, there was a significant difference between work adjustment of employed and unemployed students ($P<0.05$). The results revealed that there was a significant difference between adjustability in social activities of employed and unemployed students ($P<0.05$).

Keywords: Coping Styles, University, Employed and Unemployed Students.

INTRODUCTION

Today, a large percentage of university students are employed in full time or part time jobs and their working can affect efficiency of their studies (David, 1986). Studies found contradicting results regarding the effects of working on students' performance. Johnoson and Paye believed that employed students have better performance in university than unemployed students. Moreover, Corlbell believed that the more the working hours of students, the better performance they had in their studies. However, he added that working more than 12 hours a week could lead to educational failure (Johnoson, 1993). In recent years, the pathological approaches to health studies have been criticized. Unlike the conventional perspective that defines health as having no illness, new approaches put more emphasis on well-being rather than illness (Ryff, 1995). From this perspective, absence of symptoms is not tantamount to health. However, adjustability, happiness, self-esteem and such positive traits are indicators of healthiness. This perspective was also used in theories such as Maslow's self-actualization theory, Rogers's fully functioning person theory and Alport's mature human theory. Friedman et al. (1975) defined Coping strategies as the specific efforts, both conscious and subconscious, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events without changing personal goals (Hosseinian et al., 2006). Scholars have proposed different

classifications for coping strategies. One of these classifications which are based on orientation of the coping process toward understood problem or emotion classifies these strategies into two general categories of problem based and emotion based strategies. In problem-centered strategies which are also called task-oriented strategies (Endler & Parker, 1994), individuals encounter directly with the stressors to adjust the stressor factor. Thus, problem-centered strategies are action based and is realized by a change in individuals' relation with environment. Examples of problem-centered strategies are alleviating stress and external barriers, changing goals, finding alternative ways, seeking social support and active avoidance from stressors through physical distance. Problem-focused coping is individuals' direct behavioral and intellectual functioning to change and modify the threatening environment conditions. In other words, problem-focused coping is individuals' efforts to change the conditions and deal directly with the problems. Put simply, in problem-centered coping, individuals focus on the stressor and try to modify or eliminate the stressor factors (Hosseini, 2012). Coping styles are a collection of cognitive and behavioral activities and processes to prevent, manage or alleviate stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) divided coping strategies into two general classes of problem-focused coping and emotion focused coping. In problem-focused coping, individuals deal with the problem itself and try to manipulate the conditions while in emotion-focused coping individuals only deal with and control their own emotions. Individuals, who use emotion-centered strategies, instead of dealing with and trying to solve the problem, they try to alleviate the consequences of negative emotion. These individuals pass the stressors rather than facing it. Emotion-centered strategies can help individuals alleviate their stress and tension but can have negative consequences in long term (Watts, 2007). The other variable being investigated in this study was social adjustment. In this rapidly changing world, humans are forced to adjust and conform. Sometime, these changes and deformations and problems are too much that humans cannot keep up with or tolerate. There are different factors affecting the adjustability and conformability of humans. Adjustability in educational, individual, emotional and social environments leads to success, social consent and peace. Lazarus introduces adjustability as an important factor for alleviating the conflicts between humans' outside and inside worlds. Adjustability can be considered as a personality trait or a combination of several personality traits and social-family factors (Khodayari Fard, 2006). Peace of mind is the most important issue in everyone's life. Life satisfaction and adjustability are affected by several factors that can be evaluated in individuals' relations. Socialization is a two way communicative process between individual and society. Thus, it is considered as a complex process that has many different aspects and sides. Gaining social skills, communicating with others and social adjustability are of these aspects. Slomowski and Dunn (1996) believe social adjustability and social skills to be processes that enable individuals to understand and predict others' behaviors and control their own behavior and manage their social interactions. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to compare the coping styles and social adjustability of employed and unemployed university students in Golestan province.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was a descriptive-comparative study. The population of the study included all of the employed and unemployed university students in Golestan Province, Iran, in 2014-2015 academic years. There were 28000 university students studying in 6 different branches of Islamic Azad University in Golestan province. According to Morgan table, the sample population for this study was estimated to be 380 individuals among whom were 95 employed female students, 95 unemployed female students, 95 employed male students and 95 unemployed male students. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were instructed how to respond to the questionnaire. The participants were assured that all of their personal information would only be used in this study. The data of the study was collected using below explained questionnaires.

Coping styles questionnaire: Coping styles questionnaire was designed by Endler and Parker (1994) and was translated into Persian by Akbar Zadeh (1997). This questionnaire consisted of 48 items and was scored on a 5 point Likert basis. This questionnaire covered three main areas of coping styles; 1- problem-centered coping, 2- emotion-centered coping and 3-avoidance coping. Each item had a minimum and maximum score of 1 and 5, respectively, based on Likert scale. Respondents were asked to answer each and all items. Though, some respondents may not answer all questions. In these cases, if the number of unattended items were lower than five the items were scored 3 and if the number of unattended items were more than 5 the questionnaire would not be scored. The questionnaire is divided into three parts; questions related to problem-centered coping, questions related to emotion-centered coping and to avoidance coping. Each of these parts consists of 16 questions and the score range for each would be 16 to 80. Each of these parts that had the highest score would be counted as the respondent's coping style (Endler & Parker, 1994). Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficients for Males' problem-centered coping, females' problem-centered coping, males' emotion-centered coping, females'

emotion-centered coping, males' avoidance coping and females' avoidance coping were, respectively, 0.920.85, 0.82, 0.85, 0.85, 0.82. The total reliability coefficient for this questionnaire was estimated to be 0.8133, using Cronbach's alpha (Tirmahi, 2009). The validity of the questionnaire has also been approved in previous studies. Pearson correlation was used to estimate the correlation of the different factors in the questionnaire and the results were 0.58 for problem-centered coping, 0.55 for emotion-centered coping and 0.93 for avoidance coping (Tirmahi, 2009).

Social adjustment scale (SAS): This questionnaire was designed by Weissman and Paykel in 1999. This scale was first designed to be an interview and then was turned into a self-report questionnaire. Self-report questionnaires' being cheap to administer and eliminating the subjectivity of interviewer, is more useful for the administrator. Self-report questionnaire can be both filled by the participants or their relatives and close friends. This questionnaire contains 42 questions that measure affective and instrumental performance in occupational role (questions 1-18), social and leisure activities (questions 19-29), relationship with extended family (30-37), marital role (38-46), parental role (47-50) and family unit (51-54). The 18 questions for occupational roles are for three groups of students, housewives and employed individuals and respondents would answer only 6 questions in this part with respect to their occupational status. Thus the total number of questions in this questionnaire is actually 54 questions. High scores in each area is indicator of low social adjustment of the respondent. A total high score also means that the respondent is not socially adjustable. The correlation between answers given by 15 depressed individuals and the answers given by their spouses or other informants was 0.74 and this correlation was 0.7 between answers of patients and interviewers. The correlation between self-report scale and interview for 76 depressed patients was 0.72. The consistency for different parts of questionnaire ranged between 0.4 and 0.76. Rater consistency for interview version of 31 patients was estimated. The average correlation of raters in all items was 0.83. Total correlations for different parts of the questionnaire ranged between 0.09 and 0.83 for social adjustment interviews. Cronbach's alpha and average test-retest reliability were reported to be 0.47 and 0.8, respectively. Cronbach's alpha was also estimated to be 0.73 for self-report scale in a study in Japan (Khodayari Fard, 2006). Variance analysis and Duncan's post hoc test were used for analysis of the data. Significance level was considered $p < 0.05$ in all levels.

RESULTS

Variance analysis was used to compare the coping styles of employed and unemployed students disaggregated by sex. The results are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Results of variance analysis for coping styles of employed and unemployed students disaggregated by sex.

Source		Sum of squares	DF	Average squares	F	Significance level
Emotion-centered coping	Between groups	576.288	3	192.096	7.182	0.001
	Error	748.931	376	26.748		
	Total	1325.219	379			
Problem-centered coping	Between groups	52.893	3	17.631	2.300	0.099
	Error	214.607	376	7.665		
	Total	267.500	379			
Avoidance coping	Between groups	143.915	3	47.972	4.870	0.018
	Error	275.804	376	9.850		
	Total	419.719	379	192.096		

As evident in table 1, there was a significant difference between average scores of emotion centered coping ($p < 0.01$) and avoidance coping ($p < 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that there was significant difference between coping strategies of different groups. To determine the differences between groups, Duncan's post hoc test was used.

Table 2. Ranking average scores of avoidance strategies of employed and unemployed students using Duncan test ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Groups	Number	a	b
Unemployed male students	95	26.28	
Unemployed female students	95		27.25
Employed male students	95	24.66	
Employed female students	95	25.87	

As evident in table 2, unemployed female students are grouped differently from other groups. That is, there is a significant difference between avoidance strategies of unemployed female students and other students. According to the results, unemployed female students use more avoidance strategies than other students.

Table 3. Ranking average scores of emotion-centered coping strategies of employed and unemployed students using Duncan test ($\alpha=0.05$).

Groups	Number	a	b
Unemployed male students	95	37.00	
Unemployed female students	95		48.625
Employed male students	95	40.77	
Employed female students	95	39.75	

As evident in table 3, unemployed female students are grouped differently from other groups. That is, there was a significant difference between emotion-centered coping strategies of unemployed female students and other students. According to the results, unemployed female students use more emotion-centered coping strategies than other students. Variance analysis was used to compare the social adjustment of employed and unemployed students disaggregated by sex. The results are presented in table 4.

Table 4. Results of variance analysis for social adjustment of employed and unemployed students disaggregated by sex.

Source		Sum of squares	DF	Average squares	F	Significance level
Occupational (students)	Between groups	196.069	3	65.356	14.766	0.000
	Error	123.931	376	4264		
	Total	320.000	379			
Social activities	Between groups	371.861	3	123.954	3.351	0.033
	Error	1035.639	376			
	Total	1407.500	379			
Relationship with family	Between groups	328.268	3	109.423	0.929	0.440
	Error	3298.607	376	117.807		
	Total	3626.875	379			
Total social adjustment	Between groups	123.143	3	41.048	2.133	0.118
	Error	538.732	376	19.240		
	Total	661.875	379			

As evident in table 4, the average differences were not significant between groups for total social adjustment and adjustability in family relations. However, the average differences were significant between groups for occupational adjustment and social activities adjustment. To determine the differences between groups, Duncan test was used.

Table 5. Ranking average scores of occupational (student) adjustment of employed and unemployed students using Duncan test ($\alpha=0.05$).

Groups	Number	a	b
Unemployed male students	95	24.00	
Unemployed female students	95	25.25	
Employed male students	95		29.22
Employed female students	95		29.87

As evident in table 5, unemployed students are grouped differently from employed students. That is there was a significant difference between occupational (students) adjustments of employed and unemployed students. According to the results, unemployed students were more occupationally adjustable than employed students.

Table 6. Ranking average scores of social activities adjustment of employed and unemployed students using Duncan test ($\alpha=0.05$).

Groups	Number	a	b
Unemployed male students	95	25.10	
Unemployed female students	95	23.87	
Employed male students	95		28.111
Employed female students	95		27.62

As evident in table 6, unemployed students were grouped differently from employed students. That is there was a significant difference between social activities adjustments of employed and unemployed students. According to the results, unemployed students were less adjustable in social activities than employed students.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to compare coping styles and social adjustment of employed and unemployed students in Golestan province. The results revealed that there was a significant difference between avoidance coping styles and emotion-centered coping of unemployed female students and other groups. According to the analyses, there was a significant difference between occupational adjustment of employed and unemployed students. The results revealed that there was a significant difference between adjustability in social activities of employed and unemployed students. Results have also indicated that unemployed female students use more emotion centered strategies than other students. In explaining this finding, it can be said that according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), more use of emotion-centered coping strategies has direct relationship with anxiety, physical damages and depression. They also stated that coping strategies are medium factor between stress and physical and mental disorders. Thus, females are more vulnerable in facing the problems and are more in danger of emotional disorders. On the other hand, unemployment itself can be a mentally damaging factor and that is why unemployed individuals suffer more from anxiety, depression, life dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, disappointment and other negative emotions. Thus, unemployed females have more tendencies to use avoidance and emotion-centered strategies. Thus, it can be said that females' more using emotion-centered and avoidance strategies can be reasons for their anxiety and depression which is in line with the findings of Endler and Parker (1994) who found that there is a significant difference between females and males regarding use of emotion-centered strategies. They found that females are more vulnerable in facing the problems and more in danger of mental and emotional disorders. Other findings have indicated that there is a significant difference between occupational adjustment of employed and unemployed students. It was concluded that unemployed students are more occupationally (student) adjustable than employed students. Unfortunately, there was no previous study that has investigated social adjustment between employed and unemployed individuals. However in explaining this finding it is worth mentioning that by occupational adjustment it is meant to be a university student and deal with university affairs. As the unemployed students have more free time than employed ones, they have more time to spend on educational affairs which in turn increases their studentship adjustment. The results of Duncan test indicated that there was a significant difference between adjustment in social activities of unemployed and employed students. It was found that unemployed students are less adjustable in social activities. In today's social world, occupation is a determining factor and is part of individuals' identity. Unemployment threatens and destroys a main part of individuals' social identity. Effects of unemployment are adjusted by social skills, social status based on position and financial stability, sex, age, unemployment level and individual differences. Ladd (1999) reported from Javda (1988) that because jobs bring financial security and have

hidden functions such as punctuality and social contact, the effects of unemployment must be investigated based on these functions. He believed that having a job, whether the individuals love it or hate it, will organize their time. Employed people are more involved in social and group works. On the other side, the income of the individual will give him a sense of cooperation in the economy of the family and lessens the feeling of lack of control in families' decision. Unemployed individuals have fewer close and trustable relationships with other. Accepting or building a relationship is difficult for unemployed individuals and it will push them toward solitude. That is why employed individuals are more adjustable in social activities than unemployed individuals.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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