

Moderators and Mediators of Distress and Positive Coping in Undergraduate Students
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Abstract

Students in higher education face considerable amount of stress relating to academic demands, family issues and several other factors well documented in the literature. Issues relating to resilience and coping are important in this regard. Emotional intelligence is acknowledged as an attribute that aids one's overall adjustment. This study was conducted in a college for women students in India. The current study sought to understand stress experienced by undergraduate students along with an assessment of the extent of resilience, coping and emotional intelligence manifested in them. We were also interested in understanding the role played by resilience and emotional intelligence in the pathway from psychological distress to coping. A longitudinal design was used to assess change in these attributes over time as students moved from course entry to completion. A quantitative design was used and data collected using survey methodology. Data were collected from sixty-four students from two undergraduate programmes using standardised instruments to measure the key variables of the study. A significant change in emotional intelligence scores was seen at the point of course completion. It was also seen that resilience exerted a significant direct effect on emotional intelligence and both moderated as well as mediated the pathway between distress and positive coping. Resilience is a key variable that buffers the impact of stress as well as determines the efficacy of coping. Measures to strengthen student resilience would have significant benefits in terms of mitigating the effect of stress for students.

Key words: Resilience, Emotional Intelligence, Coping, Stress, Undergraduate student