



Gender, Coping Styles Among the Unemployed Youth

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Abstract

Coping skill is the characteristic ways of dealing with difficulties and it influences how we identify and try to solve problems. Coping can involve active attempts to modify the person environment relationship so that the demand is lessened or the resources increased. The coping skills that people bring with them to life, experiences influence, how much stress they feel and how well they cope with it. Human consequences resulting from unemployment have profound effects on one's self concept. Mental health changes of unemployed youth were typically described in terms of increased anxiety, depression, insomnia, irritability, lack of confidence, listlessness and nervousness. The males are more self-controlled and accepting responsibilities than the females. Unless the potential of young people can be used in a productive way, neither youth nor economies as a whole will face a bright future. The females are higher in confrontive coping. Young, educated women express more commitment to both work and family.

Keyword: Gender; Coping; Unemployment

Introduction

Coping skill

Coping skill is the characteristic ways of dealing with difficulties and it influences how we identify and try to solve problems. People who cope successfully do not only know how to do things. They also know how to approach situations for which they do not have a readily available response. People who know what to expect beforehand are better able to cope with stress than people who do not know what lies ahead [11,19]. It consists of the particular thoughts and behaviour. A person is using to manage the demands of a particular person-environment transaction that has relevance to his or her wellbeing. Coping may be cognitive, behavioural or a combination of two. Coping can involve active attempts to modify the person environment relationship so that the demand is lessened or the resources increased. This also involves lowering of

emotional distress through modification of perception attitude and goals.

The ego psychology model define coping as realistic and flexible thought and acts that solve problems, thereby reducing stress. Coping is viewed as having two major functions, the regulation of emotional distress and the management of the problem that cause distress. The coping skills that people bring with them to life experiences influence how much stress they feel and how well they cope with it. Experience and success in coping with similar situations, self-confidence and the ability to remain composed and "think on one's feet" instead of falling into pieces when faced with a problem. These characteristics are the products of personality development which is influenced by social relationships. A task-oriented response to tough situation is usually more effective than becoming anxious, angry, and defensive. A person may simply lack the coping resources needed to confront the situation.

In coping, people use their personal resources to master a problem, overcome or sidestep an obstacle, or resolve dilemma. Different coping strategies are effective in different type of situations. People who generally cope successfully have different personal resources and abilities. People who know beforehand are better able to cope with stress than people who do not know what lies ahead. Learning the specific skills needed to confront a stressful situation helps individual to cope more effectively. Many people enter in dangerous situations without proper training. Sometimes people failed to cope with stress because of a high level of arousal interferes with their ability to concentrate on adaptive thought.

Unemployment and the individual

The effects of unemployment on the individual have been studied from various perspectives. Human consequences resulting from unemployment have profound effects on one's self concept [16]. Unemployment causes stigma, discrediting attribute and causes the individuals who suffer it and perceive themselves to be social inferiors [8].

Future employment scenario

Various studies indicates that psychological variables can determine the future employment status. Individuals are more likely to be unemployed in the future if they report higher levels of self-blame, lower levels of optimism, utilize poor coping strategies [20]. Further, they have little job seeking support from family and friend [26]. The psychological consequences of unemployment are not homogeneous. There is a considerable variation from person to person among those who suffer the severity of the psychological impact of unemployment. The literature reveals several theoretical approaches to the experience of unemployment.

Unemployment and gender

In earlier times female unemployment has received little attention. [10] work with Swedish young adults show that girls are more likely to use periods of unemployment positively than boys. Similarly [22] concluded that women have greater experience in structuring non-work time. [7] found that the mean activity score of unemployed men was a little lower than employed men. Among women, however, the pattern was reversed with the unemployed showing slightly higher scores than the employed. Men and women differs in activity patterns. There were differences in the type of

activities men and women typically engaged. The key resource for women may have been time rather than money. Unemployment facilitates slightly higher level of activity. Further, unemployed males and females spent more time on passive forms of leisure than their employed counterparts. Prolonged unemployment leads to multi-dimensional disadvantage which involves the dissociation from the society [23]. [5] mentioned that unemployment is not only a social problem for society, but also a tragedy for individual unemployed people, it is also a violation of fundamental children's right, the right to a meaningful present which lead to a meaningful future.

There is a strong linkage between unemployment and mental health, which provides sense of meaning and purpose to life. The removal of the purpose of life sometimes lowers the quality of life. [27] have consistently revealed that the negative impact of unemployment on the affective well-being of middle-aged men. The financial demands of middle age are higher as many of them have growing children in their families. Middle aged men's social position is also strongly affected by unemployment. Their uncertainty about the future produces ambiguity that extends into the lives of all family members.

Women's unemployment can be attributed to the relatively recent entry into the labour force as well as to the traditional belief that the centrality of work is lower for women than for men [15]. It has therefore been assumed that women are not as traumatized by joblessness as men, who are generally considered to be primary wage earners. The few existing studies on women's unemployment restrict themselves to specific issues such as strategies for coping with the problem [1].

In recent times, however, there have been far reaching changes in women's work patterns and orientations, which may affect their attitudes toward unemployment. Moreover, changes in women's employment have been accompanied and possibly caused by a rise in their level of education. Thus, women have begun to cross stereotyped gender lines and enter masculine careers such as executive management, medicine and law [9,17]. These developments are associated with the changes in women's general life and career orientation which have brought them closer to men [3,13].

Recent findings suggest that young, educated women express even more commitment to both work and home than males [25].

The growing proportion of employed women, and the rise in their level of education has led to the emergence of new family patterns such as dual career families, in which both partners are committed to work and family [21].

Unemployment and health

Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on the health effects confirm that unemployed people generally experience higher levels of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. The research conducted by Fryer and Warr [6] reported that slowing down of cognitive and problem-solving activity in a study of unskilled and semi-skilled unemployed men.

Mental health changes of unemployed youth were typically described in terms of increased anxiety, depression, insomnia, irritability, lack of confidence, listlessness and nervousness. Unemployed people also described a worsening of psychosomatic conditions such as headaches, high blood pressure and ulcers. Many researchers concluded that health problem play an important role in adjustment to unemployed life.

Rationale of the study

The Eastern Vidharbha region (viz., Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, and Bhandara districts) of Maharashtra experiences the lower employment rate than the rest of the state. This study focuses on the coping style of the unemployed people. Young people are known to be unfazed by the changes in technologies as they thrive in uncertainty and insecurity. Finding a job is a rare event of the unemployed. Many unemployed are unhappy who are often in poor physical and mental health. Failing to find a job may lead to feeling of guilt or so.

Objectives

- The objectives of the project are
- To examine the effect of unemployment on the part of the males and females.
- To study the coping styles and the mental health of the youth.
- To enhance the commitment to healthy lifestyles of young unemployed.

Problems

- How does the unemployed people use their coping strategies to cope with the stressful situation?
- How does the unemployment affects the mental health of youth?
- What are the measures undertaken to enhance commitment to healthy lifestyles of unemployed?

Hypotheses

- There is significant difference between males and females coping styles.
- Males are more controlled in coping than the female counterpart.
- Males have effective problem solving than the females.
- Women at all levels would be more likely than men to reject employment due to other reasons such as difficult job conditions, and family considerations.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the eastern Vidarbha region i.e., Chandrapur, Gadchiroli and Bhandara districts. The sample was chosen through purposive sampling method and the break up of sample is as follows.

Sr. No	Place	Males	Females	Total
1	Chandrapur	59	67	126
2	Gadchiroli	25	36	61
3	Bhandara	36	17	53
4	Total	120	120	240

Table a

Measures

Subjects were asked to sit comfortably, relax and describe the most stressful event. By stressful we mean a situation that was difficult or troubling for you during your encounter or experience in the previous week and fill the questionnaire accordingly.

Ways of coping checklist by Folkman and Lazarus

The ways of coping questionnaire is based on the definition of coping as the cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and internal demands appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the individual. Coping is a process and it is directed towards what an individual actually thinks and does within the context of specific encounter and how these thoughts and actions change as the encounter unfold. This approach differs from traditional trait or disposition approach which attempt to identify what the person usually does or is most likely to do. Ego structures that operate as dispositions applicable across diverse life situations. The description of the test is as follows.

- **Confrontive coping:** Confrontive coping describes aggressive efforts to alter the situation and suggests some degree of hostility and risk taking.
- **Distancing:** It includes cognitive efforts to detach oneself and to minimize the significance of the situation.
- **Self-controlling:** Describes the efforts to regulate one's feelings and actions.
- **Seeking social support:** This describes efforts to seek informational support, tangible support and emotional support.
- **Accepting responsibility:** It acknowledges one's own role in the problem with a concomitant theme of trying to put things right.
- **Escape avoidance:** It includes wishful thinking and behavioral efforts to escape or avoid the problem. Items on this scale contrast with those on the distancing scale, which suggest detachment.
- **Planful problem-solving:** It is described as deliberate problem-focused efforts to alter the situation, coupled with an analytical approach to solve the problem.
- **Positive reappraisal:** Describes efforts to create positive meaning by focusing on personal growth. It also has a religious dimension.

The ways of coping questionnaire can be completed in about 30 to 45 minutes. Items on the questionnaire have been designed to be answered in relation to a specific stressful encounter.

Scoring

The raw scores describe coping efforts for each of the eight types of coping. In this, individuals response to each by a mark on a four-point 'Likert scale', indicating the frequency with which each strategy is used (0) indicates "does not apply and/or not used," (1) indicates "used the somewhat", (2) indicate "used quite a bit", and (3) indicates "used a great deal." Accordingly, the total score for each scale was calculated.

Procedure

The inventory was administered to the subjects for the purpose of collecting data. They were required to mention their names, educational qualifications, socio-economic status and other information for the analysis purpose. The measures were administered individually and sometimes small group sessions were also conducted. It was administered on college students studying in undergraduate and post graduate departments which took 30 to 45 minutes to complete the measure.

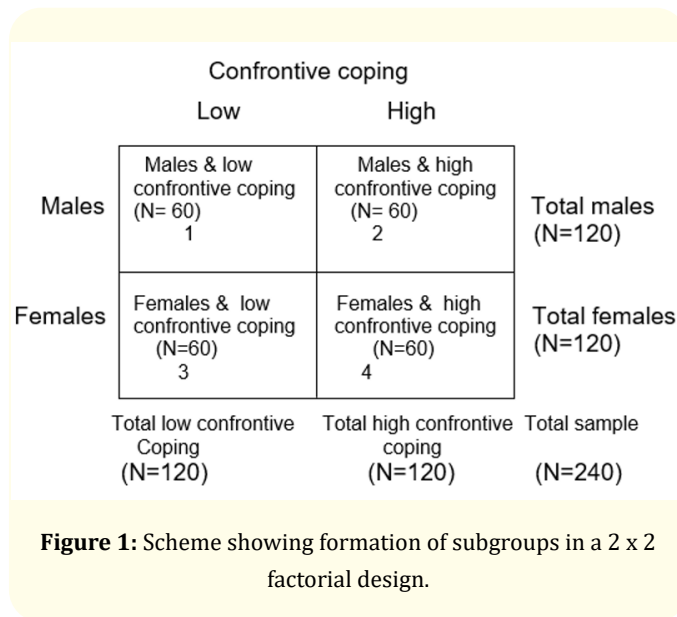
Research design

The present study is aimed at examining the effect of three major variables, viz., male - female and coping styles of the unemployed youth. The coping styles are granted the status of dependent variables while male - female and confrontive coping are treated as independent variables. The diagnostic research design was used in the entire research work.

Results

The fourfold table involved in the 2 x 2 factorial design, the entire sample of 240 unemployed was first subdivided into males and females groups. Thereafter, within each group, the scores on the relevant scale of confrontive coping were arranged in a descending order. Starting with the highest score, 60 cases were counted off in order to segregate those subjects whose scores belonged to the upper half of the distribution of the total amount of coping. These subjects constituted the high confrontive coping sub-group. The remaining 60 cases belonged to confrontive coping sub-group. The formation of these subgroups and the fourfold table is presented in figure 1.

The means and standard deviations of scores representing the coping style both overall and specific, for the four sub-groups viz., Males - low confrontive coping (Gr. 1), Males - high confrontive cop-



ing (Gr. 2), Females - low confrontive coping (Gr. 3) and Females - high confrontive coping. Also, the scores for males (Gr.1 + Gr.2; N = 108) and females (Gr.3 + Gr.4; N = 108) as well as high confrontive coping (Gr.1 + Gr.3; N = 108) and low confrontive coping (Gr.2 + Gr.4; N = 108) groups were computed. Means and standard deviations pertaining to above groups have been shown in table 1.

The means which are presented in table 1 for distancing, accepting responsibility and positive reappraisal of females viz., (M = 9.11, M = 8.16, M = 13.58) are higher than the means of males (M = 8.97, M = 7.17, M = 13.39). While the remaining scores for females are lower (M = 11.80, M = 10.82, M = 8.54, M = 11.32) for self-controlling, seeking social support, escape avoidance and planful problem-solving than the males (M = 10.46, M = 10.38, M = 7.89, M = 10.64). The results show difference in the coping strategy of the unemployed supporting hypothesis 1.

Types of coping style	Males			Females			t
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	
Distancing	8.97	2.53	120	9.11	3.37	120	0.34 ***
Self controlling	11.80	2.60	120	10.46	3.06	120	3.66 **
Seeking social support	10.82	2.91	120	10.38	2.79	120	1.18 ***
Escape avoidance	8.54	3.47	120	7.89	2.12	120	1.59 ***
Accepting responsibility	7.17	2.28	120	8.16	2.04	120	3.53 **
Planful problem solving	11.32	3.26	120	10.64	2.79	120	1.71 ***
Positive reappraisal	13.39	2.86	120	13.58	2.94	120	0.49 ***

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and the results of ‘t’ test for coping.

* p < .05 ** p < .01.

*** Not significant.

The scores were further analyzed by applying the ‘t’ test. The ‘t’ ratios for self-controlling (t = 3.66, p < .01) and accepting responsibility (t = 3.53, p < .01) in table 1 was found to be significant. These significant ratios indicate the difference in coping style of the males and females. The males are more self-controlled and accepting responsibilities than the females while the other coping skills indicate reverse effect. The ‘t’ ratios is also found to be significant for self-controlling and accepting responsibility (t = 3.66, p < .01 and t = 3.53, p < .01) respectively supporting hypothesis 2, while the other ‘t’ ratios are not significant supporting hypothesis 4.

The mean of males for planful problem solving is greater than the females (M = 11.32 and M = 10.64). However the ‘t’ ratio is insignificant (t = 1.71, n.s) supporting hypothesis 3.

The contrast groups of table 2 does not shows significant difference in distancing (t = 0.001, n.s.; t = 0.60, n.s.). While in self controlling males - low confrontive coping and females - high confrontive coping was significant (t = 5.40, p < .01) supporting hypothesis 2. The ‘t’ ratio of seeking social support is insignificant (t = 0.38, n.s., t = 1.18, n.s.). The escape avoidance scale and the pair of males - low confrontive coping and females - high confrontive

coping found to be significant ($t = 2.18, p < .05$). While the other contrast group did not found to be significant ($t = 0.14, n.s.$). The other pairs for planful problem solving shows significant difference

($t = 18.42, p < .01, t = 9.99, p < .01$). The positive reappraisal pairs are not significant ($t = 1.17, n.s., t = 0.23, n.s.$) partially supporting hypothesis 4.

Pair No.	Type of group	N	Mean	SD	t
1	Distancing				
(I)	Males - high confrontive coping	60	8.63	2.66	0.0001 ***
	Females - low confrontive coping	60	8.63	3.22	
(II)	Males - low confrontive coping	60	9.31	2.37	0.60 ***
	Females - high confrontive coping	60	9.64	3.46	
2	Self controlling				
(I)	Males - high confrontive coping	60	10.63	2.33	0.16 **
	Females - low confrontive coping	60	10.71	2.88	
(II)	Males - low confrontive coping	60	12.97	2.34	5.40 **
	Females - high confrontive coping	60	10.20	3.20	
3	Seeking social support				
(I)	Males - high confrontive coping	60	10.87	3.45	0.38 ***
	Females - low confrontive coping	60	10.66	2.45	
(II)	Males - low confrontive coping	60	10.76	2.28	1.18 ***
	Females - high confrontive coping	60	10.18	3.08	
4	Escape avoidance				
(I)	Males - high confrontive coping	60	8.08	3.52	0.14 ***
	Females - low confrontive coping	60	8.16	2.51	
(II)	Males - low confrontive coping	60	9.00	3.41	2.18 *
	Females - high confrontive coping	60	7.72	3.02	
5	Planful problem solving				
(I)	Males - high confrontive coping	60	13.84	1.48	18.42 **
	Females - low confrontive coping	60	8.47	1.70	
(II)	Males - low confrontive coping	60	8.79	2.50	9.99 **
	Females - high confrontive coping	60	12.77	1.80	
6	Positive reappraisal				
(I)	Males - high confrontive coping	60	12.89	3.04	1.17 ***
	Females - low confrontive coping	60	13.50	2.63	
(II)	Males - low confrontive coping	60	13.89	2.61	0.23 ***
	Females - high confrontive coping	60	13.77	2.29	

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of confrontive coping scores obtained by contrast groups and results of ‘t’ test.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

*** Not significant.

The means in table 1 of females ($M = 9.11$) for distancing is found to be higher than the males ($M = 8.97$). This indicates that females sometimes detach themselves from the situation. The 't' ratio does not found to be significant ($t = 0.34$, n.s.). Similarly, the contrast groups of males and females is not significant ($t = 0.001$, n.s., $t = 0.63$, n.s.). Thus, the results partially supports hypothesis 4.

Discussion

The employment opportunities available to millions of young people are limited, making it inevitable that youth remain dependent on their families for a longer period of time. Unless the potential of young people can be used in a productive way, neither youth nor economies as a whole will face a bright future. Young people without a decent income cannot support themselves and will therefore be more likely to stay within the family much longer than the family can afford. The extended financial burden ruins the chance of family as a whole to get out of poverty and sometimes hampers the chances of younger family member's access to education. An inability to find employment creates a sense of vulnerability, uselessness and idleness among young people and can increase the attraction of engaging in illegal activities. The International Labour Organization (ILO) is strengthening its commitment to facilitate, coordinate and provide technical guidance under integrated programme of work for youth employment.

Hypothesis 1 verifies coping strategies of males and females. This measures how the individual cope to a stressful situation. The females are higher in confrontive coping which means that the females take aggressive efforts to alter the situation. The distancing indicates that the females detached themselves and always minimize the significance of the situation. Similarly, the females acknowledge their own role in feeling of stress of being unemployed.

The changes in womens employment have been caused by rise in their level of education. Thus, women have begun to enter masculine careers such as executives, medicines etc. [9,14,17]. Many studies conducted in various countries shows that young, educated women express more commitment to both work and family. Carmen and Nielson [2] in their research have concluded that males and females have similar long-term goals.

Young women and men are the world's greatest asset for the present and future, but they also represent a group with serious

vulnerabilities. In recent years, increasing global unemployment has hit young people hard and youth are faced with high levels of economic and social uncertainty. Compared to adults, the youth of today are more than three times as likely to be unemployed. Often, their full potential is not realized because they do not have access to decent and productive work. Joblessness among young people is indeed a problem, but equally worrying. The males show that they sometimes avoid the problems than the female counterpart. Furthermore, they have planful problem-solving capability which means that they sometimes alter situation or problem indicating the trend in the desired direction.

Young workers are more likely to find themselves working long hours, on short-term and informal contracts, with low pay and little or no social protection. The trend is in the desired direction and supports hypotheses 2 and 3.

The distancing scale describes individual's cognitive efforts to detach oneself from the situation. The females on this scale found to be higher than the male, while in seeking social support they shows reverse trend. However, these partially supports hypothesis 4 of the study under consideration.

Major findings

The major findings of the present study are

- The long-term unemployed ness leads to depression, anger and anxiety.
- The males and females differ in their coping style.
- Males are more self-controlled than the females.
- Males have effective problem-solving capability than the females.

Limitations

- The data which were collected from the Eastern-Vidarbha region and could be generalized.
- The obtained sample was between the ages of 18 to 30 and could not be applied to other age groups.

Conclusions

The females are higher in confrontive coping which means that the females take aggressive efforts to alter the situation. The distancing indicates that the females detached themselves and always minimize the significance of the situation. The changes in women's employment have been caused by rise in their level of education. The males are more self-controlled and accepting responsibilities than the females, while males sometimes avoid the problems than the female counterpart.

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