

## INVESTIGATING STRESS COPING STRATEGIES USED BY MODEL COLLEGE STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

Students experience stress at every level of their schooling. Normal reaction of the body to challenges is stress. Stress has evolved into a regular occurrence in daily life due to the several internal and outside expectations placed on students. Stress-ridden students may suffer significant negative effects that can be avoided and managed. Therefore, keeping in mind the stated objectives, which included identifying the stress coping strategies used by college students and was analyzed most frequently stress coping strategies being used by Model College students in Islamabad. The study's approach was descriptive. The study population included on 8056 college students from Islamabad Model College for Boys and Islamabad Model College for Girls. The sample consisted on 368 (first year 187 and second-year 181) college students from Islamabad Model Colleges for Boys and Girls. Convenient sampling helped the respondents to be selected. Data came from the Brief cope inventory (Carver, 1997). Standard deviation, mean values, and percentage approaches were used in statistical analysis of the tabulated data. Convenient sampling was used to gather a sample of thirty students—other than those involved in the main study—for pilot testing of the questionnaire. There was found the coefficient alpha value of internal dependability.  $\alpha = 0.61$ . The results of the study revealed that, respectively, religion, active coping, and self-distraction were the three coping mechanisms most often used for emotional, problem-oriented, and avoidant coping. The study found that students at model colleges utilized stress management strategies more problem-oriented than emotionally or avoidance-oriented. One of the suggestions is that students should have access to some kind of support structure, such mentorship and counseling, to help in stress management and inform them about the bad consequences of stress. A counseling unit consists on lecturers and students should be interactive and strengthen their bonding among them to develop supportive abilities like chatting and sharing and make students feel more at ease expressing their emotions.

**Key words:** - *Stress Coping Strategies, internal reliability's, mentoring and counseling.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Stress affects college students in two ways as it diminishes school performance and damages mental health and overall wellness status. After high school students encounter several tough challenges since the academic expectations rise and they need to adapt to social connections and manage their financial obligations. Students attending college must implement successful coping strategies to protect their mental health while maintaining their academic success. Individuals employ different coping methods because they adapt to their personal features and environmental variables that incorporate cultural roots and personality traits (Chen et al., 2025; Gondal et al., 2025). Adaptable coping strategies that include both mental restructuring and mindfulness training enable students to develop resilience along with reduced anxiety symptoms. The research investigates university student utilization of active coping methods because previous investigations show that avoidance behaviors increase stress levels and damage academic performance (Xu et al., 2025; Abdullah et al., 2025). Institutional education should use this acquired knowledge to design adaptive coping intervention programs that support student well-being.

### Statement of the Problem

Many times, college life is linked with more academic expectations, social pressure, and personal issues that cause students to be stressed out. Too much stress could cause psychological disorders including anxiety and depression. Stress in the twenty-first century is regarded as a mental cancer that prevents the student from considering his obligations and studies. Learning stress causes students both psychological and physical issues during study hours. Unquestionably, stress is now the main claimed obstacle to academic success. The study topic seeks to look at how college students cope with stress. Developing good support systems and treatments to improve college students' mental health depends on knowing the coping strategies they use. Though stress-coping techniques are important, there is a dearth of thorough studies looking at the methods and strategies college students use to help with stress in their life. Therefore, such a scenario must pinpoint the stress coping mechanisms used by pupils to handle demanding circumstances in the classroom.

### Significance of the study

The study advances knowledge about coping strategies in a particular demographic, therefore benefiting the field of psychology and mental health. Examining the coping mechanisms used by these people helps researchers to understand the value of different tactics. then create customized treatments to help kids more successfully control their stress. Suggesting the finest choices to help the students will benefit the college management, professors,

department of management and counseling. This study will also be a useful tool for college students to manage their stress and knowing good coping mechanisms will have significant effects on their general well-being, academic performance, and future mental health.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- 1) To identify stress coping strategies being used by college students.
- 2) To analyze the most frequent stress coping strategies being used by college students.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) How do college students handle stress? Using what coping mechanisms?
- 2) College students are more likely to be using which coping mechanism—emotion-focused coping problem-oriented coping and avoidance coping)?

### **Delimitation of study**

The study will be delimited to

- 3) Islamabad Model colleges for boys and girls Islamabad.
- 4) Science group

### **Literature Review**

Two important techniques to deal with academic stress are cognitive restructuring combined with emotional regulation. Studying mindfulness results in reduced anxiety levels while improving students' ability to focus (Chen et al., 2025). Students who demonstrate high emotional intelligence levels succeed better in managing their stress because it helps them adapt to academic challenges (Austral et al., 2025). At the same time, support from family and peers strongly affects stress levels within students and their ability to manage the situation. Students who pursue social assistance receive improved mental wellness results according to research findings (Jaris et al., 2025). An established support system helps students develop resilience traits while creating academic success through feelings of belonging.

Cultural context influences coping strategies. The choice between communal and individual-based coping methods exists as a cultural difference since collectivist communities prefer collective resolutions versus individualistic countries which focus on personal problem-solving. Individuals from different social strata along with personalities and genders select their coping mechanisms (Chudzicka-Czupala et al., 2025). The

strategies of denial and avoidance are used frequently but lead to stress and academic failure. Reports by Abdullah et al. (2025) demonstrate that stress-reducing behaviors linked with anxiety and depression warrant interventions aimed at mental health improvement (Abdullah et al., 2025).

## Methodology

This study investigated among model college students the stress coping mechanisms using a quantitative descriptive survey design. This design is suitable for methodically gathering and evaluating data from a particular demographic to identify the most often used coping strategies.

Students from model colleges—usually marked by good academic achievement and competitive surroundings—make up the population of the research. 368 students chosen specifically to provide sufficient generalizability of the findings and representation. Using stratified random sampling, one guarantees representation from several classes—that is, freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. By enabling balanced sampling over several academic levels, this method reduces prejudice.

## Variables:

- **Independent Variable:**
  - **Stress Levels:** Measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS).
- **Dependent Variable:**
  - **Coping Strategies:** Assessed using the Brief COPE Inventory, which includes problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping strategies.
  - **P-Value:** Significance level set at **0.05**. Results will be considered statistically significant if  $p < 0.05$ .

This study investigated the stress coping strategies used by Model College students Islamabad. The data collected about accessing the stress coping strategies being used by Model College students are discussed in detail.

## Research Design

This study was of descriptive character. This was a quantitative study. We applied a survey technique. The study was done under the positive paradigm. It looked at how exemplary college students in Islamabad managed their stress. Good stress management helps the students to easily reach their objectives in their academic lives. This study made use of quantitative data. To access the adopted coping mechanisms of stress, the data were gathered from boys and girls of Islamabad Model Colleges.

Population of study  
Students from the Model Colleges for Boys and Girls made up the population of study. The demographic of the planned study was Science Group students grade 11 and grade 12 Islamabad Model College for Boys and Islamabad Model College for Girls Islamabad. The Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad advised that the overall population of study was 8056, based on the strength of the colleges (IMCB and IMCG) of 26 in number and college students of scientific group of higher secondary level.

**Table 1**

### *Islamabad Model Colleges for Boys*

Sr. #	College Name	Total No. of Students
1	ICB, G-6/3	1150
2	IMCB, F-8/4	527
3	IMCB, F-7/3	476
4	IMCG, G-10/4	536
5	IMCG, F-10/3	351
6	IMCG, I-10/1	329

## Sample and Sampling technique

The Sample of the study was consisted of 368 (Male=183 and Female=185) Islamabad Model College for Boys and Girls students in total that were selected by convenient sampling technique.(D. W. Morgan et al., 1970 (table of sample size) Educational Research Fifth Edition Gay 1995).

## Research Instrument

The Brief Cope Scale (Carver, 1997) was used. The instrument consists of 28 items that measure 14 factors which correspond to a Likert scale ranged from 1 - 4 (never, sometimes, mostly and always).

## Data Collection

A request for permission of data collection was initiated to the director of schools of Federal Directorate of education as per research rule. After getting permission, data was collected through personal visits. Researcher personally visited the Model colleges IMCG and IMCB Islamabad. Descriptive research examined the stress coping techniques employed by Islamabad's model colleges. The gathering of data was analysed using descriptive statistics, percentage, frequency, and mean by inputting the data and calculating the outcome. Each questionnaire item was processed and analysed using SPSS. Utilizing frequencies, percentages, and averages score, data was analyzed. A questionnaire that included quantitative data was used to collect the data for this investigation. Using descriptive statistics, the quantitative findings from the survey's closed-ended questions were compiled. Based on the data analysis, conclusions, findings, and recommendations were formed. The average score for every item was estimated. To determine overall the strength of the responses to each question, the mean score for each statement was decided. The following scale was utilized to find out mean score.

Table 2

***Scale Information***

1	N	Never
2	S	Sometimes
3	M	Mostly
4	A	Always

**Data Analysis**

The current study looked on the stress coping mechanisms employed by Model College pupils. Stress is a result of how people assess the demands of the circumstance and weigh those needs against their capacity to satisfy those expectations. So in this study stress coping strategies being used by model college students are assessed with help of Likert scale ranged from 1-4 (never, sometimes, mostly, always). The sample of research study was 368 model college male and female students.

The Brief Cope Scale (Carver, 1997) was used to assess the coping style. Brief Cope is brief form of cope inventory and consisted of three sub-scales categorized into 14 dimensions in 28 items. Cope has three sub scales namely Emotion Focused Coping (use of emotional support, venting, humour, acceptance, religion, self-blame), Problem Focused Coping (active coping, use of instrumental support, positive framing, planning) and Avoidant Coping (self-distraction, denial, substance use, behavioral disengagement). Items 5, 9, 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27 and 28 pertains to emotion focused coping, 2, 7, 10, 12, 14, 17, 23, 25 pertains to problem focused coping and items 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 16, 19 pertains to avoidant coping. Score has four response option 1 for never, 2 for some time, 3 for mostly 4 for always. There would

be 3 parts in data analysis in the following ways.

4.1 Demographic information

4.2 Data Analysis of Questionnaire

4.3 Data Analysis of subscales

4.1 Analysis of Demographic information

The following tables presented the descriptive statistics of the demographics distribution of this research study.

Table 3

*Class wise distribution of students*

Category	Frequency	Percent
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	187	50.8
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	181	49.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3 shows class wise distribution of the respondents, 187 (50.8%) belonged to 1<sup>st</sup> year and 181 (49.2%) belonged to 2nd year class.

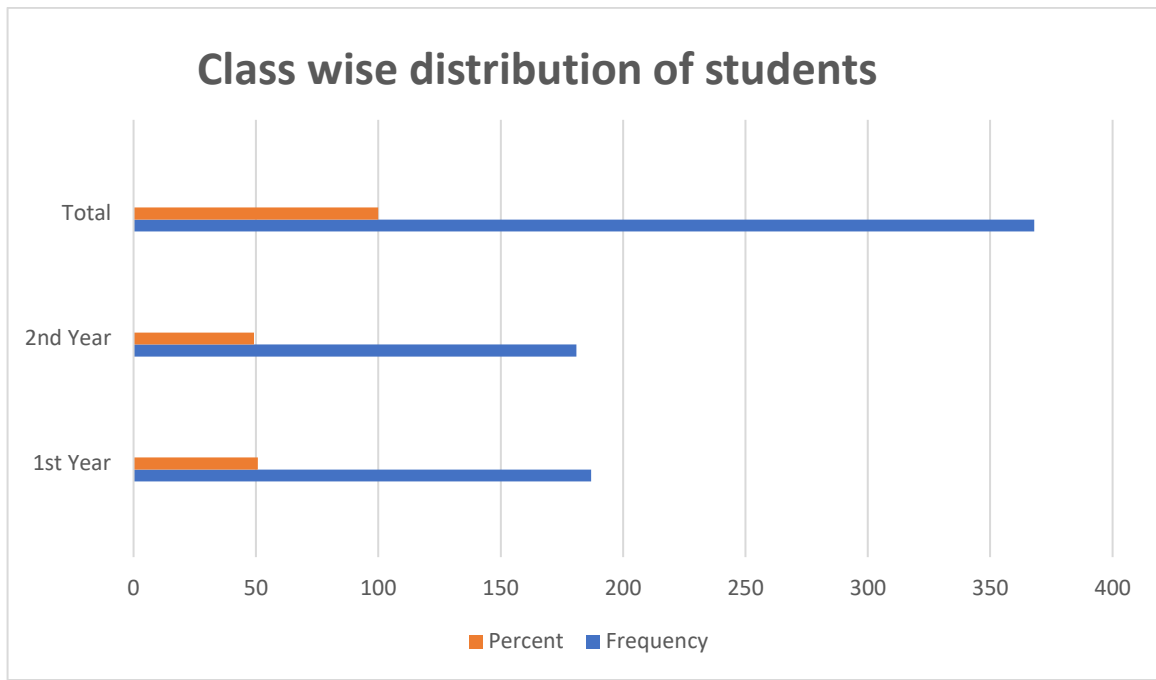


Table 4

Gender wise distribution of students

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	183	49.7
Female	185	50.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4 shows the gender of students 183 (49.7%) were male students and 185 (50.3%) were female students.

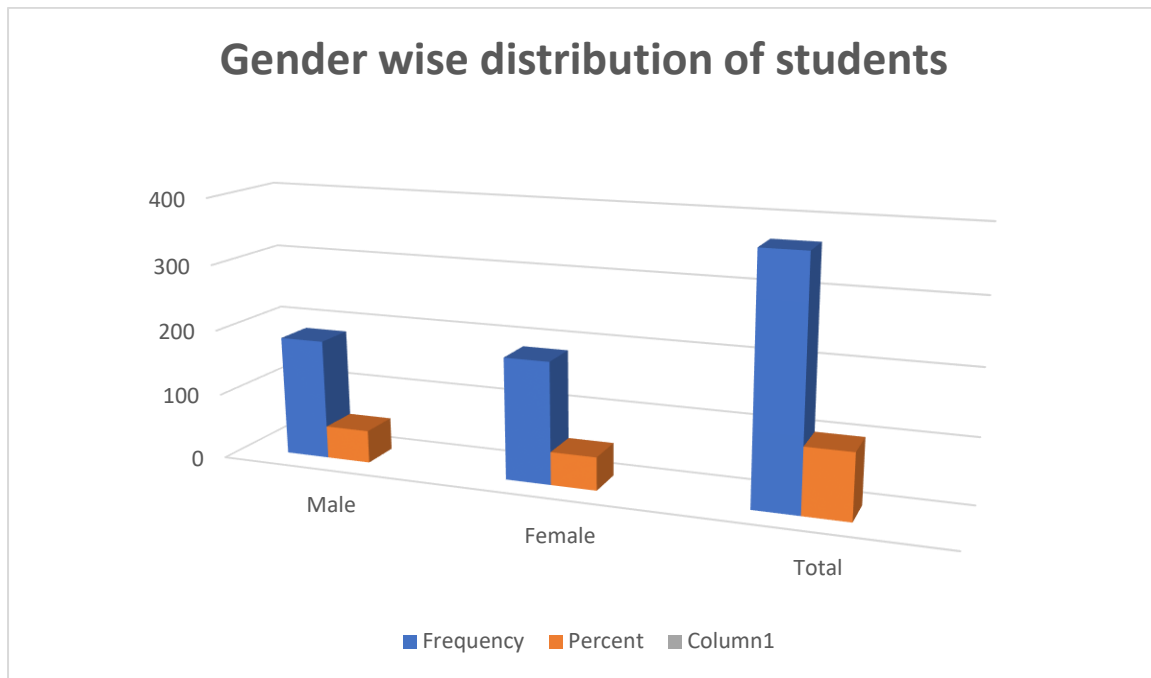
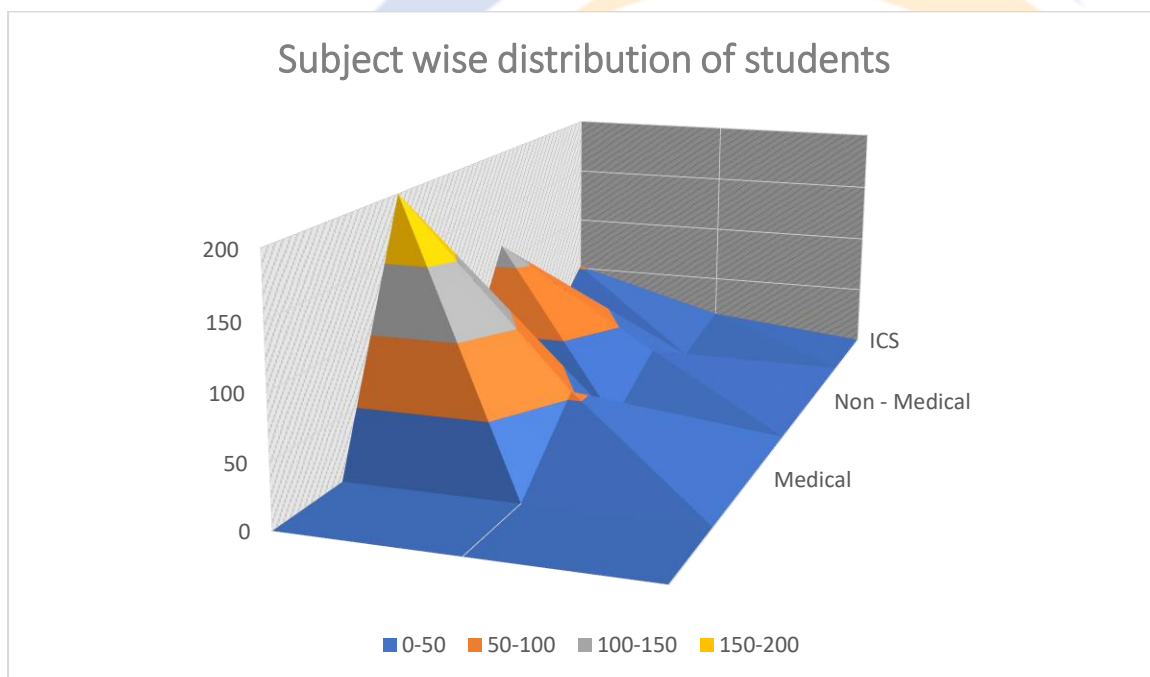


Table 5

*Subject wise distribution of students*

Category	Frequency	Percent
Medical	200	54.3
Non - Medical	116	31.5
ICS	52	14.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5 shows the subject wise distribution of students, 200 (54.3%) students had medical, 116(31.5%) had non-medical and 52 (14.2%) had ICS.



## SUMMARY

Students experience stress at every level of their schooling. Normal reaction of the body to challenges is stress. Stress has evolved into a regular occurrence in daily life due to the several internal and outside expectations placed on students. Stressful students may have significant negative effects; so, it is advisable to avoid and cure such effects. Therefore, keeping in mind the stated objectives, which included identifying the stress coping strategies used by college students and was analyzed most frequently stress coping strategies being used by Model College students in Islamabad. The study's approach was descriptive. The study population included on 8056 college students from Islamabad Model College for Boys and Islamabad Model College for Girls. The sample consisted on 368 (first year 187 and second-year 181) college students from Islamabad Model Colleges for Boys

and Girls. Convenient sampling helped the respondents to be selected. Data were acquired using the BCI (Carver, 1997). Using statistical techniques with percentages, mean values, and standard deviation, the data were totaled and examined. Using easy sampling, a sample of thirty students—other than those involved in the main study—were selected for pilot testing the questionnaire. One found the coefficient alpha value of internal reliability.  $\alpha$ : 0.61. The results of the study indicated that three coping strategies were religion, active coping, and self-distraction.

most often utilized, respectively, for avoidant, problem-oriented, and emotionally focused, coping mechanisms. The study found that students at model colleges utilized stress management strategies more problem-oriented than emotionally or avoidance-oriented. One of the suggestions is that students should have access to some sort of support structure, such mentorship and counseling, to help in stress management and inform them about the bad consequences of stress. A counseling unit consists on lecturers and students should be interactive and improve their bonding among them to develop supporting skills like chatting and sharing and assist students feel more at ease expressing their emotions.

### Findings Related to Objective 1

The first objective of the study is to identify stress coping strategies being used by college students. Following findings are drawn from the analysis of obtained data about frequency of usage of stress coping strategies. Responses from participants show that religious coping strategy (religious beliefs, meditation or praying) recorded the highest means (3.42, 3.14) and standard deviation (2.24, 0.96) while the lowest means (1.21, 1.25) and standard deviation (.64, .68) was recorded for drugs or substance use coping as shown in table 4.15 and table 4.8. Therefore, it can be concluded from the findings that students most frequently utilise active coping, followed by positive reframing coping, planning, and behavioural management. While the least employed tactic is asking for others' counsel or social support for practical purposes, as seen in table 3 The findings also show that planning,

active coping, religious coping, self-distraction, and self-coping are the most often utilised

coping mechanisms, whereas denial, humor, and seeking emotional support for practical purposes were sometimes employed. This shows that while dealing with stress, students at Islamabad's model institutions feel responsible for the issue rather than blaming others. Though students attempt to pinpoint the source of stress, separate its causes, such as exhaustion, and develop strategies for tackling each issue one at a time.

Planned coping, giving up on coping, religious belief, and taking action, on the other hand, had low standard deviations of 0.97, 0.95, and 0.96, respectively, indicated that the responses were more similar and extremely near to the mean. On the other hand, the use of instrumental support, emotional support, venting coping (expressing negative feelings), humour coping (joking about the situation), and acceptance coping (learning to live with the situation) all had standard deviations of 1.0, indicating that the responses for the use of these strategies were uniform and dispersed. This suggests that the respondents did not favour the use of denial coping, self-blame, seeking social support, or instrumental motives as stress management measures.

As seen in Table 4 It demonstrates that positive reinterpretation and growth plan received the greatest mean score of 3.88 (standard deviation of 0.96), while seeking social assistance for emotional reasons received the lowest mean score of 2.61 (standard deviation of 1.18) in the study. This suggests that active coping, planning, and positive reframing are the methods of the problem-focused style of stress management that students at model institutions used most, whereas instrumental coping was the method that was utilised the least. Furthermore, the results from Table 4 illustrate that all of the other coping mechanisms listed under the emotion- focused way of managing stress are occasionally utilized. This finding suggests that most students deal with stress by seeking out the positive aspects of the problem, take the stressful situation more positive, learn lessons from the hard time, and try to improve themselves. This backs up Low's (1997) assertion that students often address their difficulties by giving them a positive meaning in terms of personal development, as quoted by Amran et al., Students think that the challenges they face could change them for the better, rather than addressing the challenging circumstance with a negative attitude. Positive reframing (0.97) and drug usage (0.68) were associated with lower standard deviations, indicating that the answers were more comparable and closer to the mean.

## Findings related to objective 2

The following conclusions were reached after attempting to determine which coping mechanisms were typical among students at model institutions in Islamabad. Tables 1, 2, 3 display Emotion Focused Coping, Problem Focused Coping and Avoidant Focused Coping respectively shows those items which are under the above mentioned coping styles. Overall mean of means for all these coping styles are mentioned as well. It is clear that kids employ all of these coping, including problem-, emotion-, and avoidant-focused. However, compared to emotion-focused style (overall mean score of 2.5) and avoidant focused (overall mean score of 1.9), students are more likely to utilise the problem-focused style (overall mean score of 2.8). It is evident from the outcomes that students at model institutions in Islamabad tend to employ the problem-focused approach to stress management more often than the emotion- or avoidance-focused approaches. According to Low (1997), who was quoted by Amran et al. (n. d.), the inference is that students utilize their behavior to lessen or completely remove the emotional effects of stress. They believe it is crucial for students to utilize their ideas or actions to mitigate the emotional effects of stress because if they experience intolerable stress, they will not be able to learn. In an effort to determine which coping method is preferred by students at model institutions in Islamabad for handling stress, it is discovered that the problem-focused items (SD 1.0) which illustrate that the responses are more similar and close to the mean and dispersed which items having the standard deviation of 0.9 shows that responses are more similar. And standard deviation of the items of avoidant focused also depict that responses are similar and dispersed. The consequence is that although while the problem-focused coping style is scored higher than the emotion-focused coping style but both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping methods are utilized often in stress management.

## CONCLUSION

College grads might employ a range of coping strategies and embrace a range of enlightened views, which helped them to successfully navigate the transition from school to the workplace and overcome personal obstacles. Our findings offer crucial information for families, society, researchers, and graduates as they make the transition from high school to college. They should also be seen as the first step in the creation of specialized

intervention programmed that will enhance the wellbeing of recent college graduates. It can be inferred from the results that out of the 14 strategies employed, religion, active coping, and self-distraction were the three that, in turn, were most common for the problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping approaches.

According to the study, stress management techniques utilized by students at model colleges were more problem focused than emotion or avoidant oriented. One of the recommendations is that students should have access to some sort of guidance and support to teach them how to manage their stress and to help them learn about the negative effects of stress. The formation of community supportive groups composed of academics and students would help the counseling unit's services, in order to foster the development of supporting skills like talking and sharing and help students feel more at ease expressing their emotions.

## **DISCUSSION**

The primary objective of the study was to identify and discuss the stress coping strategies utilized by model college students. The results show that students utilize more constructive coping mechanisms than destructive ones. Meaning that when students are worried, they choose to use productive stress-management strategies to deal with their feelings. According to this finding, it was discovered in various studies (Kumar, 2011; Labrague et al., 2017; Lo, 2017) that the majority of college students employed healthy stress coping techniques. The broad framework of socio-cultural factors may be to blame for the fact that most pupils seem to use appropriate and healthy coping mechanisms and moral principles of Eritrean society. Or, to put it another way, people learn and develop in a culture that values mutual reliance above all else. According to some researches, spirituality and social values encourage the use of effective coping mechanisms (Krok, 2008). The results of this study also revealed that college students' typical stress coping methods include getting enough sleep and rest, talking and sharing problems with parents, friends, and teachers, avoiding situations that cause stress, and watching comedies and films that are entertaining.

This result is in line with the research that shows that among college students, coping mechanisms include prayer, meditation, and sleep as well as social (family) support, avoidance, and social (family) support college students. College graduates employed both

problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies to deal with challenging life circumstances. When faced with a stressful circumstance, people may choose to adopt problem-focused coping techniques, emotion-focused coping techniques, or a combination of both, depending on the situation and how they perceive it when dealing with stress. The ability of an individual to successfully overcome challenges that endanger health functioning is a socio-ecological process rather than a personal feature. The capacity of college graduates to cope should, therefore, be encouraged from an ecological perspective, embracing both internal and external means. The main external strategy is to offer material, technical, and emotional support, with the ultimate objective of assisting individuals to accurately internally recognize challenges and to strengthen their courage and capacity to deal with challenges. By refraining from contemplating or reevaluating the threat, emotion-focused coping attempts to control emotional stress. A person's "internal" technique of coping with life experiences by managing emotions and choosing whether to act or accept a situation is referred to as emotion regulation and sense of mastery. It has been found that using emotional coping skills and seeking solace from within might lessen discomfort and depression and improve quality of life. People who use optimism as a coping mechanism might be less prone to go through psychological distress.

## RECOMMENDATION

- In order to manage the stress, they are under, students need to know themselves even better
- Students' coping mechanisms for stress may be provided by their teachers. They must be accessible to their pupils.
- By advising them on what is appropriate to do
- Parents should teach their kids coping mechanisms for the stress they are under.
- Friends may enable other friends to cope with stress better.

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