

PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

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Collectivistic Coping Styles and Mental Well-Being of College Students in Malaysia

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between depressive symptoms and collectivistic coping styles (CCS) among Malaysian college students. A total of 176 (130 females, 46 males) students from a university in Selangor, Malaysia, completed measures of CCS and mental well-being. Data were analyzed using correlation coefficient and regression analysis. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between mental well-being and CCS. Specifically, regression analysis showed that acceptance, reframing, and striving (ARS), family support (FS), and private emotional outlet (PEO) were significant predictors of mental well-being among college students in Malaysia. These dimensions of collectivistic coping strategies were particularly useful to mitigate stressors among college students in Malaysia.

Introduction

The demanding expectations of academic performance often lead students to experience stress and depression (Shamsuddin et al., 2013). High levels of stress among college students tend to negatively affect well-being of students (Manap, Hamid, & Ghani, 2019). A recent report by the Malaysian National Health and Morbidity Survey (Institute for Public Health, 2018) estimated that 20% of Malaysian adolescents experience depressive symptoms on a daily basis. Researchers (Berry, 2006; Siu & Chang, 2011) have examined coping to understand ways and strategies that people use to resolve problems, regulate negative emotions, or avoid stressful events.

Coping strategies are defined as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands that are far beyond the existing resources of a person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Individuals engaging in active coping (e.g., attempting to resolve problems, seeking social support, or adopting different cultural norms) tend to have more interactions with their new environment. Studies (Coyné & Racioppo, 2000) showed that coping plays a central role in adaptation to stressful life events. Coping strategies are the specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that individuals employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events (Watson, Logan, & Tomar, 2008).

According to Heppner and Krauskopf (1987), applied problem solving (or coping) is defined as “highly complex, often intermittent, goal-directed sequences of cognitive, affective, and behavioral operations to adapt to what are often