

Influence of Family on College Students Coping with Stress

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Abstract: The focus of this study was to investigate the influence of family on college students coping with stress. Data was collected in a campus classroom setting among N=202 adult undergraduate students with an age range of 18-64 years; 120 males and 82 females participants. The participants completed two instruments: Ways of Coping (WOC) Scale with 66 items and the Family Quality of Life (FQOL) Scale with 16 items. A One-Way ANOVA was used for data analysis that indicated participants with low social support, dissatisfied with life scored lower in family interaction, parenting and emotional well-being. Female participants used accepting responsibility, escape avoidance and positive reappraisal stress coping strategies than male participants. Participants satisfied with life used confrontive coping, seeking social support and accepting responsibility stress coping strategies than those dissatisfied with life. Participants from high parenting families used confrontive coping, painful problem solving and positive reappraisal than those from low parenting families.

Keywords: Stress, coping, Social support, Life satisfaction, Parenting, Family Interaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Seeking higher education is very beneficial for having a successful future. College is hard work that can take time and a lot of planning. Some students go to college straight after graduating from high school and some go after taking a break from school. Young adults are challenged when transitioning from high school to college to live independently, handle finances, maintain academic standards and integrity, and adjust to a new social life (Broughan et al., 2009). Those who go to school directly after graduating from high school have a lot to look forward to. There are many decisions to make, like leaving the primary source of social support, develop new attachments, and adjust to their academic achievement is a few of what students encounter in college (Love & Murdock, 2012). The decisions of whether to go to college locally or far away, staying on campus or commuting or getting involved with the college atmosphere is not easy for many of those contemplating to attend college. Choosing the right college plays a huge role in determining what type of career path a student will take.

Traditional students range from the age of 18 to 24 years old and they are able to transition from doing high school work to college work more easily. Being in college is different from high school because there is more freedom and a lot of self-discipline involved. On the pursuit of an educational goal college students are confronted by many challenges (Struthers, Perry, & Menec, 2000). Students who choose to live at home and commute have to plan on purchasing a parking pass and finding a parking spot. Some universities are very spacious and require students to walk far from parking to class. Students who want to live on campus can be more involved in the campus community. When a student signs up for on campus living, one will have to consider living with a complete stranger and a different atmosphere. A major stress in college is moving away to live in a small room with someone you do not know (Aselton, 2012). Clashing of personalities could become a negative thought but a future roommate could probably become a very good friend (Aselton, 2012).

Nontraditional students are considered students 25 years old and up. These students are usually the ones that take a break from school after high school. When they come back to school they may have to get used to doing homework and other college educational related activities. Their transition can be harder than a traditional student when going to college.

Nontraditional students may have children, work, or have older parents to take care of. Going back to school and juggling a personal life is hard. For many young adults college has been found to be very stressful (Piercell & Keim, 2007). Majority of classes may include younger students which can make nontraditional students feel intimidated. Being a nontraditional student has its advantages as well. An older student may have established self-discipline and responsibilities. When it comes to school they can utilize their multitasking skills and they can also help other students by giving advice (Piercell & Keim, 2007).

Many colleges house sororities and fraternities that combine people together with common principles, goals, and experiences. These groups can make their members feel like a family. The need to feel connected with others is considered important in the development and socialization process (Nawaz & Gilani, 2011). It is always a good thing to get involved in campus life because it's good for networking and making lifelong friends. Career fairs are often offered for all students. Even first-year students can benefit from career fairs. They can talk to some companies and see what requirements they need in order to get in the field. Individuals need to engage in a complicated process beyond simple information gathering in order to make a career decision (Jeeyon & Mijin, 2015). Recreation centers can offer students exercise equipment, basketball courts, swimming pools, and sport equipment rental. Recreation centers can be helpful for exercising, relieving stress, and staying occupied. Tutoring can be very helpful to students who may be struggling in a class that need extra help. Some colleges even offer on-site child care for students who would like to have their children close to them (Jeeyon & Mijin, 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress can occur to anyone and it can mentally or emotionally cause a strain on somebody. Stress can range from waking up late to getting fired from your job. Stress can help with the ability to adapt back to normal and it can help to build resilience. College student stressors can range from missing a test to receiving a fine. Two positive stressors could be meeting a new friend or joining a club for college students (Britt et al., 2016). This type of stress comes from accomplishments. Being stressed too much can cause various health problems.

Children aren't always affected by stress. Going to school and always doing well can cause adolescence to be stressful. Adults can become stressed from their job, children, or even responsibilities of being independent. College students are a combination of all. College tuition is more expensive than it was when our grandparents attended college (Hudd et al., 2000). Coming out of college with the huge debt can hinder some students from moving forward in their career path. Financial stress is one of the multiple stressors that college students hold (Hudd et al., 200). High levels of stress have been reported for 52% of college students during a typical college semester (Hudd et al., 200).

Studying, passing courses and fitting with people can be stressful to college students. Being surrounded by strangers can be difficult to make friends especially for a person who isn't very social. Optimistic and stress-free young adulthood is usually what college is portrayed as, filled with late-night discussions by carefree attitude that nearly all things are possible with resiliency and resolve (Britt et al., 2016). Most of the stress of a college student comes from their personal life instead of their education. Family plays a part of the personal life. Some students have children to take care of. Taking care of a child comes with a lot of responsibilities and can add more stress to a college student. Taking care of older parents also requires a lot of attention and time. Some students are a part of the sandwich generation where they take care of their children and older parents which can be very stressful at times.

Some college students find out a lot about themselves as self-identity is the step into becoming an independent person. Trying to figure out likes, dislikes, wants, and goals help to create a better path for achievements. Self-growth during college is an accomplishment. Undergraduate years are an opportunity for positive attainment but students with high levels of perceived stress are more likely to see it in negative ways. This could result in not seeing the positive aspects of education such as learning self-growth because they are more concerned with the stress instead of the benefits (Krypel & Henderson-King, 2010). Learning how to adapt in certain situations instead of reacting is hard for some people. Being around other people can be stressful but it helps students grow mentally and emotionally (Ekpenyong, Daniel, & Aribio, 2013)

College student are required to be independent which includes getting things organized such as appointments, getting homework done, and keeping test scores together are examples of being organized. Staying consistent with study habits

and getting enough sleep can assist with passing courses. Some majors include competition to get into a program. For example nursing students have to keep good grades and pass exams with very high scores. They all compete against each other to get into the nursing program. A lot of studying, sleepless nights, and practicing goals go into the preparation to become a nurse. Competition can be stressful, and can cause doubts within student. Poor eating habits can come from stress and staying up late as vending machines can become a substitute for a meal for a student who doesn't have time to eat a well-balanced meal. A significant association between stress and problems eating has been found in students (Wichianson et al., 2009).

Being social and having a social life is a highlight in a student's college life. Hanging out with people and making memories that can last forever is a part of college life. Doing things that can make you smile and happy takes your mind off some situations for a little bit of time. Secure parental attachments are associated with higher social competence with college students (Holt, 2014). School takes up a lot of time having friends or being in a relationship also takes up time. Being able to manage life can be beneficial to a college student. Wasting time can be one of the biggest stressors among college students. Planning when it's time to study, have fun with friends, and family time can put a balance in a college student life. Balancing out the time in a day can promote healthier eating habits, better sleep schedules and more energy. Having a schedule with some space can help things fall into place.

2.1. Parental attachment:

When a child is born the first person they bond with is their parents or caregiver. Early interactions need to be stable, consistent, and sensitive to the child's needs to develop a secure attachment (Blomgen et al., 2016). Secure parent attachment is very beneficial for a child when they grow up as it helps a child grow up with a good set of adaptive skills and social skills. Insecure parental attachment can make children feel lonely and rejected. Children who usually feel rejected will have poor social skills and won't want to reach out to others for help. Both attachment styles stick with a person for a long time. Humans are innately programmed to seek closeness to others and presumably with their parents, they are by ensuring human survival, and that humans develop internal working methods of themselves in others are two main premises of attachment theory (Mattanah, Lopez, & Govern, 2011).

During adolescence stages, going to school and learning can be affected by the child attachment style. Insecure attachment children were more likely to blame others for their problems or will just avoid the problem. Children with a secure attachment are more willing to ask for help when they have a problem. They will help others when they are struggling. They are more open to express their feelings. Parenting styles also play a part in how children will grow up into adapt to their surroundings. There are four styles of parenting authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and avoidance parenting (Nawas & Gilani, 2011). Little is known about the underlying mechanisms of influences on adolescence pursuit of their educational and career related goals are though educational researchers and theorist agree on the positive effects of parental in peer support (Nawas & Gilani, 2011)

2.2. Coping with Stress:

When one recognizes the source of what causes stress, then one is able to deal with it. There are many ways to relieve stress and make it useful. Coping is dealing with responsibilities, problems, or difficulties that are associated with stress. Dealing with stress isn't easy and sometimes it can be very difficult for the victims. With proper coping methods stress can be lowered or avoided. Choosing the best coping method depends on the way a person feels at the moment. The use of current and the development of new resources to deal with stress are involved in coping (Britt et al., 2016). Students may bring a preferred set of tailored academic coping strategies that enable them to adapt to academic specific situations instead of approaching the stressful situation with a general routine (Broughan et al., 2009).

Students have many options when dealing with stress. On a campus there are friends available to talk to and get advice. Even professors can help when it comes to projects or assignments that cause stress. Professors can help map out a plan and encourage students to speak to them when they have a problem. There is always family that can be called to help. Family knows more about the person and can help somebody calm down when you're going through stressful situations. Parents can help by encouraging college student not to give up and make one feel better. Siblings can give advice and even distract you from problems. Some campuses offer counseling services for free to their students and staff. Students can tell their problems to someone who can help find resources to make things easier.

Moving around and staying active can help when dealing with stress. Playing an active sport relieve stress through having fun. Exercising helps keep the person healthy and active. Identifying events a student finds to be stressful and coping methods they use to manage their stress can give a greater understanding of a college students stress reaction (Broughan et al., 2009).

There are some bad coping styles some students choose to engage in that could be very harmful. When stressed out eating a lot of food can play a part in coping. Over eating can make someone gain excess weight and lead to health issues. Drugs and alcohol can be used as coping styles that can cause harm. Drugs prevent the mind from being able to think in a good stable state. Side effects of drugs can be hallucinations, suicidal thoughts, and addiction. Alcohol can cause organ problems later on in life. The temporary feeling doesn't solve the problem of stress.

Good coping skills help with mental wellness when dealing with stress. Stress can cause changes in brain chemicals but by using coping skills you can bring the brain to a balance. Identifying weaknesses and accepting them can build self-awareness (Gnika et al., 2012). Giving and receiving support can help any person in a time of need. Stressful moments are a learning process. Getting over stress builds strength. If you ever have to go through a similar situation you would know what to do because of the prior experience with stress. Being at peace with yourself is very important. Getting to know who you are, what makes you happy inside and learning to deal with what you can and cannot change about yourself helps you become at peace with your life.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants:

The data in this study was collected from undergraduate students at a University college from various majors of study. The study had total number of 202 participants, male 120 (60%) and female 82 (40%). Age of the participants ranged from 18 – 64 years. Each participant was informed the participation in this study was voluntary, confidential and anonymous.

3.2. Research Questions:

RQ-1. Is there a difference in student life satisfaction on their Family Quality of life?

RQ-2. Is there a difference in student social support on their Family Quality of Life?

RQ-3. Is there a difference in gender on student stress coping styles?

RQ-4. Does student life satisfaction influence stress coping styles?

RQ5. Does low and high parenting influence students stress coping styles?

3.3. Materials:

The demographic scale was basic questions including age, sex, ethnicity, marital status, parents marital status, life satisfaction, present financial well-being, and current social system. The FQOL scale was created by Hoffman, Marquis, Poston; Summers & Turnbull (2006) consists of a 16-item instrument designed to measure family quality of life. It assesses how participants feel about their family life on areas of parenting, family interaction and emotional well-being. Ways of Coping (WOC) scale is 66 item scale used to rate coping with stress on daily situations

3.4. Procedure:

Institutional Review Board (IRB) application for the study was approved. Investigator emailed professors at the University asking for permission to give survey during class time. Once professors responded and agreed to allow data collection in their classroom, investigator took surveys and consent letters to the classrooms. Investigator passed out surveys and consent letters to students and it took 10-15 minutes to complete the survey. The investigator collected all finished surveys. The data from all collected surveys was then individually entered into SPSS by the investigator. All hard copies of surveys are kept in the office of the principal investigator for several years before they are destroyed.

4. RESULT

RQ1. Is there a difference in student life satisfaction on their Family Quality of life?

Table 1: Life satisfaction on their family quality of life

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FamilyInteraction	Dissatisfied	128	19.7500	4.12788	1	392.000	30.177	.000
	Satisfied	72	22.6667	2.39718	198	12.990		
	Total	200	20.8000	3.85934	199			
Parenting	Dissatisfied	128	25.0234	4.86586	1	318.571	17.238	.000
	Satisfied	72	27.6528	3.03111	198	18.481		
	Total	200	25.9700	4.47091	199			
EmotionalWellbeing	Dissatisfied	128	15.4219	3.34054	1	204.357	20.280	.000
	Satisfied	72	17.5278	2.85308	198	10.077		
	Total	200	16.1800	3.32458	199			

One-way ANOVA was computed comparing participants dissatisfied and those satisfied with life on family interaction, parenting and emotional-wellbeing. A significant differences was found on Family interaction ($F(1, 198) = 30.177, p < .05$, Parenting ($F(1, 198) = 17.238, p < .05$, and Emotional well-being ($F(1, 198) = 20.28, P < .05$. **Tukey's HSD** was used to determine the nature of the difference between participants dissatisfied with life and those satisfied with life. These analysis revealed that participants dissatisfied with life scored lower ($M=19.75, sd= 4.128$) than participant satisfied with life ($M=22.667, sd=2.398$) on family Interaction. Participants dissatisfied with life scored lower ($M= 25.023, sd= 4.867$) than participant satisfied with life ($M=27.653, sd= 3.03$) on parenting. Participants dissatisfied with life scored lower ($M=15.423, sd= 3.34$) than participant satisfied with life ($M=17.53, sd=3.325$) on family emotional well-being.

RQ2. Is there a difference in student social support on their Family Quality of Life?

Table 2: Social support on their Family Quality of Life

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FamilyInteraction	Low Social Support	90	19.1111	4.17172	1	453.277	36.015	.000
	High Social Support	112	22.1250	2.95347	200	12.586		
	Total	202	20.7822	3.84424	201			
Parenting	Low Social Support	90	24.2778	5.34859	1	454.173	25.722	.000
	High Social Support	112	27.2946	2.97932	200	17.657		
	Total	202	25.9505	4.45291	201			
EmotionalWellbeing	Low Social Support	90	14.8333	3.50361	1	293.593	30.807	.000
	High Social Support	112	17.2589	2.70717	200	9.530		
	Total	202	16.1782	3.30805	201			

One-way ANOVA was computed comparing participants dissatisfied and those satisfied with life on family interaction, parenting and emotional-wellbeing. A significant differences was found on Family interaction ($F(1, 200) = 36.015, p < .05$, Parenting ($F(1, 200) = 25.722, p < .05$, and Emotional well-being ($F(1, 200) = 30.807, P < .05$. **Tukey's HSD** was used to determine the nature of the difference between participants dissatisfied with life and those satisfied with life. These analysis revealed that participants with low social support scored lower ($M=19.1111, sd= 4.17172$) than participant with high social support ($M=22.1250, sd=2.95347$) on family Interaction. Participants with low social support scored lower ($M= 24.2778, sd= 5.34859$) than participant with high social support ($M=27.2946, sd= 2.97932$) on parenting. Participants with low social support scored lower ($M=14.8333, sd= 3.50361$) than with high social support ($M=17.2589, sd=3.30805$) on family emotional well-being.

RQ3. Is there a difference in gender on student stress coping styles?

Table 3: Gender on student stress coping styles

		N	Mean	Std.Devi.	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
AcceptingResponsibility	Male	120	11.6667	2.40913	1	26.371	4.329	.039
	Female	82	12.4024	2.55246	200	6.092		
	Total	202	11.9653	2.48854	201			

EscapeAvoidance	Male	120	20.2333	4.20830	1	87.448	4.340	.038
	Female	82	21.5732	4.87126	200	20.148		
	Total	202	20.7772	4.52576	201			
PositiveReappraisal	Male	120	19.8333	4.50272	1	133.333	7.134	.008
	Female	80	21.5000	4.03780	198	18.690		
	Total	200	20.5000	4.38934	199			

One-way ANOVA was computed comparing participants dissatisfied and those satisfied with life on accepting responsibility, escape avoidance, and positive reappraisal. A significant differences was found on Accepting Responsibility ($F(1, 200) = 4.329, p < .05$, Escape Avoidance ($F(1, 200) = 4.340, p < .05$, and Positive Reappraisal ($F(1, 200) = 7.134, P < .05$. **Tukey's HSD** was used to determine the nature of the difference between participants dissatisfied with life and those satisfied with life. These analysis revealed that male participants scored lower ($M=11.6667, sd=2.40913$) than female participant ($M=12.4024, sd=2.55246$) on Accepting Responsibility. Male participants scored lower ($M=20.2333, sd=4.20830$) than female participant ($M=21.5732, sd=4.87126$) on Escape Avoidance. Male participants with ($M=19.8333, sd=4.50272$) than female participants with ($M=21.5000, sd=4.03780$) on Positive Reappraisal.

RQ4. Does student life satisfaction influence stress coping styles?

Table 4: Life satisfaction influence stress coping styles

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ConfrontiveCoping	Dissatisfied Life	128	16.5547	3.17423	1	67.377	6.480	.012
	Satisfied Life	72	17.7639	3.31235	198	10.397		
	Total	200	16.9900	3.26853	199			
SeekingSocialSupport	Dissatisfied Life	128	16.2734	4.02495	1	96.721	6.466	.012
	Satisfied Life	72	17.7222	3.56913	198	14.959		
	Total	200	16.7950	3.92044	199			
AcceptingResponsibility	Dissatisfied Life	128	11.6719	2.51330	1	28.501	4.648	.032
	Satisfied Life	72	12.4583	2.40854	198	6.132		
	Total	200	11.9550	2.49884	199			

One-way ANOVA was computed comparing participants dissatisfied and those satisfied with life on confrontive coping, seeking social support, and accepting responsibility. A significant differences was found on confrontive coping ($F(1, 198) = 6.480, p < .05$, seeking social support ($F(1, 198) = 6.466, p < .05$, and accepting responsibility ($F(1, 198) = 4.648, P < .05$. **Tukey's HSD** was used to determine the nature of the difference between participants dissatisfied with life and those satisfied with life. These analysis revealed that participants dissatisfied with life scored lower ($M=16.55, sd=3.17423$) than participant satisfied with life ($M=17.764, sd=3.31235$) on confrontive coping. Participants dissatisfied with life scored lower ($M=16.273, sd=4.02495$) than participant satisfied with life ($M=17.722, sd=3.56913$) on seeking social support. Participants dissatisfied with life scored lower ($M=11.672, sd=2.40854$) than participant satisfied with life ($M=12.458, sd=2.49884$) on accepting responsibility.

RQ5. Do low and high parenting influence students stress coping styles?

Table 5: Low and high parenting influence students stress coping Styles

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ConfrontiveCoping	Low parenting	83	16.1807	3.46813	1	99.195	9.702	.002
	High parenting	119	17.6050	2.99496	200	10.224		
	Total	202	17.0198	3.26593	201			
PainfulProblemSolving	Low parenting	83	17.4699	3.17128	1	44.940	4.193	.042
	High parenting	119	18.4286	3.34353	200	10.719		
	Total	202	18.0347	3.29990	201			
PositiveReappraisal	Low parenting	83	19.6867	4.03620	1	93.837	4.968	.027
	High parenting	117	21.0769	4.55267	198	18.890		
	Total	200	20.5000	4.38934	199			

One-way ANOVA was computed comparing participants dissatisfied and those satisfied with life on confrontive coping, painful problem solving, and positive reappraisal. A significant differences was found on confrontive coping ($F(1, 200) = 9.702, p < .05$, painful problem solving ($F(1, 200) = 4.193, p < .05$, and positive reappraisal ($F(1, 200) = 4.968, P < .05$. **Tukey's HSD** was used to determine the nature of the difference between participants dissatisfied with life and those satisfied with life. These analysis revealed that participants with low parenting scored lower ($M=16.1807, sd= 3.46813$) than participant with high parenting ($M=17.6050, sd=2.99496$) on confrontive coping. Participants with low parenting scored lower ($M= 17.4699, sd= 3.17128$) than participant with high parenting ($M=18.4286, sd= 3.34353$) on painful problem solving. Participants with low parenting scored lower ($M=19.6867, sd= 4.03620$) than with high parenting ($M=21.0769, sd=4.55267$) on positive reappraisal

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of family on college students coping with stress. Secure parental attachments are associated with higher social competence with college students (Holt, 2014). This study showed that students with higher social support scored higher in family interaction, parenting, and emotional well-being than students with lower social support. Students who had a secured attachment when they were younger were more likely to develop competence and adapt to other relationships as they get older. Mattanah, Lopez and Govern (2011) agreed that the parent-child relationship contributes to the adjustment and development of college students.

During the first couple of years of a child's life, they develop an internal working model. An internal working model is a schema regarding the dependability and strategies of accepting a partnership with their parents around the time a child is feeling vulnerable. Brougham et al, (2009) suggested that identifying events a student finds to be stressful and coping methods they use to manage their stress can give greater understanding of a college student's stress. It was predicted that students with a satisfied life would be better with coping. In this study students with a satisfied life scored higher than students with a dissatisfied life on confrontive coping, finding social support for advice, and accepting responsibility. Accepting weaknesses builds self-awareness (Gnika et al. 2012). Many students with satisfied lives still go through a series of challenges during seeking a higher education for example receiving a low score on a test. Instead of blaming the professor for the low score, they would use the score as fuel for motivation and study harder. College student's stress and course grades reflect their academic coping and motivation styles (Struthers, Perry & Menec, 2000).

Females' students scored higher in accepting responsibility, escape avoidance, and positive reappraisal than male college students on stress coping styles. Gender roles are a part of the influence of women showing their feelings more than men. Broughan et al, (2009) agreed that college women reported greater use of emotional- focus coping strategies including expressing feelings, seeking emotional support, denial, acceptance, and positive reframing than college men. People who use emotion- focused coping are more likely to find emotional support from peers or venting makes them feel relieved. People who use problem-focused coping are more proactive dealing directly towards the stress (Krypel, & Henderson-King, 2010). Students with satisfied life on their family quality of life scored higher than students with a dissatisfied life in family interactions, parenting, and emotion-wellbeing. Students with a satisfied life have had more positive experiences with their family. Family quality of life involves the family receiving services that are of an interest to the life if the individual (Hoffman et al., 2006). In today's society our everyday needs are based around family. Health, social service, and education programs frequently espouse a family-centered approach to practice; consequently, policy makers at the federal level increasingly recognize the importance of including family outcome measures (Hoffman et al., 2006). Family has a role in the way college students cope with stress. Positive family involvement in a student's life creates the type of coping styles and method that are implemented throughout their life. Females are more likely to be open about their feelings because of their internal working model of self (Broughan et al, 2009). The more satisfied that a person is with their life factors into how they are able to accept responsibility and seek help when needed.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion this study contributes to the understanding and value of studying the influence of family on college students coping with stress. It also demonstrates the different stress coping styles of college students. Family quality of life is measured by family interactions, parenting, and emotion-wellbeing. As diverse community of college students enter a different atmosphere while in college. There are multiple stressors that they will be exposed to for example less structure, meeting new people, and keeping academic requirements high. College creates a path that contributes to self-growth and vocational aptitude.

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