

Coping, Communication & Decision-Making Skills among School Students

Himanshi Sharma,* Dr. Daisy Sharma**

Abstract

The present study was attempt to study the Coping, decision making and communication skills of students studying in private and government schools of Delhi. The objective of the study is to compare these skills i.e. communication, communication and coping skills among students of private & government school of Delhi. Other objective of the study is to explore the influence of socio-economic factor of students. As the present research makes use of comparative research design so for this purpose the sample of the study were consists of 600 students of VIII & IX class (both male & female) from private & government school of Delhi. To measure these skills, three scales were used i.e. Communication scale by Barkman and Machtmes (2002), Decision Making scale by Cater et.al (2010) and Coping with stress Brief COPE Scale by Carver (1997) in the study. Collected data was analysed by using SPSS 21.0 and three-way ANOVA was applied to study the differences between the two groups of private and government school students for these particular skills. Results revealed significant differences among government and private school students in their communication skill, coping with stress skill and decision-making skill.

Keywords: Adolescents, Decision making, Communication skill, Coping

About authors:

*Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Adult and Continuing Education & Extension,
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

**Corresponding Author, Assistant Professor, Keshav Mahavidyalya Department of Psychology, University of Delhi

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the significant stage of life which provides a passage leading towards maturity. According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF,2011) report 1.2 billion adolescents in the world stand at the crossroads between childhood and the adult. Around 243 million of adolescents live in India and these young people are between the age of 10 to 19 years which account for nearly one quarter of the total population of India. Adolescence is the transitional period between childhood to adulthood and it is most crucial period of life as there are physical, psychological, social and emotional changes taking place in adolescence lives. These changes of adolescent lives include leaving or completing school, bearing a child, and becoming economically productive. These experiences are more common in this age group than in others, that are capable of substantially altering life trajectories which includes non-consensual sex, alcohol and drug abuse, self-harm and interpersonal violence, and getting into trouble with the law. Diet and activity patterns, friendships, educational achievement, and civic involvement all affect current health, schooling, and family life, but they also have long-term effects on well-being in adulthood and even on future generations (Richter, 2006).

During this 21st century, life globally is undergoing crucial transition and various changes and these results into coming up with different life experiences. The physical and psychosocial changes that occur during puberty make manifest generational and early-childhood risks to development, in the form of individual differences in aspects such as growth, educational attainment, self-esteem, peer influences, and closeness to family (Richter, 2006). Studies showed that poorly managed changes may lead to increased tension between parents and children, mental health issues, and the adoption of risk-taking behaviours such as the consumption of alcohol and other drugs (Costello, Foley, & Angold, 2006; Dallo & Martins, 2011). Students are growing in greater complexity, various uncertainties & diversity, rapid changes in environment is continuously going on. To face these challenges of everyday life there are various skills which a student needs to be acquainted with¹. According to World Health Organisation there are various life skills i.e. Self-Awareness, Coping with stress, effective communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, coping with emotions and interpersonal relationship skills. These skills help adolescence in their holistic development. The present study also focuses on the Coping, Communication & Decision-Making Skills.

Adolescence and Coping Skill

Today stress is the most common and prevalent problem among students and they are facing various types of stress in different forms i.e. pressures in academics, bullying, peer pressure etc. School and the learning process are perceived as both stress factors and a means of contributing to the development of coping strategies. The academic environment has come to be considered stressful as a result of the need to comply to the difficult objectives like to obtain certain grades, to confirm the expectancies of the parents, or the social demands, to keep one's state of wellbeing and solve social relations (Frydenberg et al., 2009; Cunningham et al., 2002). All these objectives make their life more stressful. Students at this age are being under the pressure of major changes in life (Santrock, 2003), facing a variety of problem situations, adolescents use multiple strategies in order to adapt in their life (Strong, De Vault, & Cohen, 2008). Besides these other issues also there in adolescent's life i.e. increasing academic pressure, sibling and parental conflict, peer pressure and romantic relationship problems were the main issues children encountered daily (Spirito et al., 1991). Due to modernisation various other problem starts arrived, De Anda et al.'s (2000) in their study list the issues related to school such as body image, social issues, relationships, violence and death. To cope up with these stresses a student should acquainted with coping skill. Coping was defined as cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage psychological or physiological stress (Lazarus, 1993), or as a cognitive, emotional and behavioural response to stress (Beutler, Moos, & Lane, 2003). A recent review concerning the coping strategies has collected more than 400 different category labels (Skinner, & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007). Coping strategy refers to a technique of coping adopted in a specific context. Over a period of time the individual develops a specific coping style. This refers to the manner in which an individual respond to any stressful event (Lazarus, 1977).

Adolescence and Communication skill

Communication is an imperative precious stone of life. It is via the medium of communication that one has the capability to communicate the thoughts, desires and feelings. Communication is the art of speaking, reading,

listening and writing. The ability to communicate effectively is an essential skill in today's world (Krishna, 2018). But this skill is lacking behind in adolescents due to globalization and technical advancement and many types of screen available in front of them i.e. smart phones, mobile, television and other multimedia. Social-communication difficulties due to restricted and/or repetitive interests and behaviours, along with commonly reported anxiety, often create barriers to frequent, inclusive, and broad participation across a range of activities at home, school and in the community for adolescents (McConnell, 2002; Rao, Beidel, & Murray, 2008). Various studies also suggest that an improvement in the quality of communication between a child and a parent reduces the risk of poor academic achievement and low self-esteem among children (Hartos & Power, 2000; Park and Koo, 2009). Previous studies also concluded that open or positive communication between a parent and child is associated with fewer child externalizing symptoms (Davidson & Cardemil, 2009), adolescents' life satisfaction (Levin, Dallago, & Currie, 2012); children's coping strategies (Gentzler, Contreras-Grau, Kerns, & Weimer, 2005); decreased level of antisocial behaviours (Davalos, Chavez, & Guardiola, 2005); problem-solving strategies (Offrey & Rinaldi, 2014) and peer pressure and bullying (Lee & Wong, 2009). Therefore, the existing review clearly state that healthy communication is very helpful for child and it improved various skills of child.

Adolescence and Decision-Making skill

All human beings make decision of everyday life. Adolescents, are in best phase of their life, they have to take decision related to their school, colleges, career etc. Decision-making is a process of identifying and choosing alternatives based on the values and preferences of the decision maker. Pre adolescents is the stage of self-exploration and characterised about taking decision of their skills, strength and abilities. As they become more autonomous, adolescents need to carry the burden of making many decisions that influence their lives both short-term and long-term (CF, Mann). Besides general challenges of living in a modern society, they face some particular challenges which pose significant demands on their decision-making abilities. Therefore, special

attention of educational professionals and of others with an interest for the well-being of youth focuses on decision challenges, often linked with the time of adolescence. Information is often considered as support in making choices about career, health, risk-taking behaviours and other important topics (Kolarić et al, 2018). Recognizing the importance of being informed, many studies investigate how well adolescents are informed about certain topics related to challenging situations they may face, such as reproductive health, education and career, drug-abuse, and alike (Cf. Babarović). The lack of appropriate information that would help adolescents understand their alternative choices diminishes their potential to make informed decisions and may lead to unsatisfying decision outcomes, both short and long term. Therefore, making a decision implies that there are alternative choices to be considered, and in such a case it is important not only to identify as many of these alternatives as possible but to choose the one that best fits with our goals, objectives, desires, values, and so on (Harris, 1998).

The present study focuses on the three skills of adolescents i.e. coping, communication and decision making. The objectives of the present study are –

To study the differences in communication skill

1. To study the differences in communication skill of government and private school students of Delhi.

2. To study the differences in coping skill of government and private school students of Delhi.
3. To study the differences in decision-making skill of government and private school students of Delhi
4. To study the impact of the influence of the type of family among private & government school students of Delhi.

Research Hypothesis:

1. There will be a significant difference in the communication skill of government and private school students of Delhi.
2. There will be a significant difference in the coping skill of government and private school students of Delhi.
3. There will be significant difference in the decision-making skill of government and private school students of Delhi.
4. (Interaction effect): There will be a significant interaction school & gender; School & family type and Gender & family type when they are compared on the measures of communication skill, decision making skill and coping skill.

Method

Sample: The sample of the study comprised of 200 students of VIII & IX class (both male & female) from private & government school of Delhi. The age range of students was 12 to 14 years. Convenience sampling technique was used to draw the sample. The sample was collected from the two-government school of Delhi and two private school of Delhi.

Table 1: Shows the participants by school and gender

School	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Government	71	29	100
Private	61	39	100

Design: $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design was used in this study. Comparative research design was used. Independent variable of the study includes School type (Government and Private school); Gender (male and female) and Family Type (Nuclear & Joint). Three dependent variables were included i.e. Communication, Decision making and Coping with Stress.

Tools:

1. **Communication Scale:** This was developed by Susan Barkman and Krisanna Machtmes (2002). The scale has 23-items and it assesses youth's ability to communicate that are needed to use effective communication practices. Reliability of the scale is .80 and internal consistency is .79.

- 2. The Brief COPE Scale:** The Brief COPE was developed by Carver, 1997. The Brief COPE has 28 items and within that 14 subscales religion, substance use, active coping, planning, positive reframing, acceptance, humour, using emotional support, using instrumental support, self-distraction, denial, venting, behavioural disengagement and self-blame. Reliability and validity were ranged from .50 to .90.
- 3. The Decision-Making Scale:** The Decision-Making scale was developed by Cater and Melissa Cater, Mary Arnold, Lisa Bouillion Diaz, Katherine Heck, June Mead, Beverly Spears, Ben Silliman, and Maureen Mulroy, Jill Walahoski and Suzanne LeMenestrel, 2010. There are five items in the scale which assess the decision-making skill of adolescents. The reliability of scale exhibited excellent internal consistencies i.e. 0.83.

Socio Demographic Schedule: The schedule was prepared to collect the student's information of students related to Gender, Family Type, Age, Mother & Father Occupation, Religion and Caste.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Mean and SDs scores of Decision making, Coping with stress and Communication on the basis of School (Government & private), Sex (Male & Female) and Family type (Nuclear & Joint)

			Decision Making	Coping with stress	Communication	
Private/Government School			Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	N
Private School	Female	Nuclear	11.08 (2.629)	67.12 (6.327)	56.48 (11.442)	25
		Joint	10.57 (2.277)	66.07 (7.849)	62.43 (8.131)	14
		Total	10.90 (2.490)	66.74 (6.828)	58.62 (10.661)	39
	Male	Nuclear	10.42 (2.669)	69.71 (7.086)	57.38 (9.155)	24
		Joint	10.86 (2.406)	67.76 (9.802)	54.07 (9.064)	37
		Total	10.69 (2.500)	68.52 (8.822)	55.75 (9.064)	61
	Total	Nuclear	10.76 (2.642)	68.39 (6.766)	56.92 (10.287)	49
		Joint	10.78 (2.352)	67.29 (9.261)	56.82 (9.406)	51
		Total	10.77 (2.486)	67.83 (8.113)	56.87 (9.798)	100

Government School	Female	Nuclear	9.63 (2.929)	67.05 (5.441)	47.26 (9.415)	19
		Joint	9.40 (2.413)	65.40 (8.154)	57.10 (6.641)	10
		Total	9.55 (2.720)	66.48 (6.407)	50.66 (9.685)	29
	Male	Nuclear	10.09 (2.364)	63.32 (8.653)	54.02 (10.647)	53
		Joint	10.67 (2.870)	62.89 (7.545)	55.50 (12.258)	18
		Total	10.24 (2.493)	63.21 (8.336)	54.39 (11.006)	71
	Total	Nuclear	9.97 (2.512)	64.31 (8.068)	52.24 (10.700)	72
		Joint	10.21 (2.740)	63.79 (7.714)	56.07 (10.484)	28
		Total	10.04 (2.566)	64.16 (7.935)	53.31 (10.728)	100
Total	Female	Nuclear	10.45 (2.824)	67.09 (5.894)	52.50 (11.468)	44
		Joint	10.08 (2.358)	65.79 (7.807)	60.21 (7.863)	24
		Total	10.32 (2.657)	66.63 (6.604)	55.22 (10.927)	68
	Male	Nuclear	10.19 (2.450)	65.31 (8.677)	55.06 (10.265)	77
		Joint	10.80 (2.542)	66.16 (9.343)	54.96 (10.110)	55
		Total	10.45 (2.497)	65.67 (8.935)	55.02 (10.162)	132
	Total	Nuclear	10.29 (2.583)	65.96 (7.802)	54.13 (10.742)	121
		Joint	10.58 (2.494)	66.05 (8.856)	56.56 (9.741)	79
		Total	10.41 (2.546)	66.00 (8.213)	55.09 (10.402)	200

As observed in table 2 there is an uneven group of male and female students. For the valid result the data should pass all the assumption of the three-way ANOVA test. According to the assumption of three-way ANOVA there is a need to be homogeneity of variances for each

combination of the groups of the three independent variables. To test the homogeneity of variances Levene's test for homogeneity of variances for Communication, Decision Making and coping with stress was applied in SPSS.

Table 3: Leven's Test of Equality of Error Variances

	F	df 1	df 1	Sig.
Communication	1.051	7	192	.397
Decision Making	.920	7	192	.492
Coping with stress	1.305	7	192	.250

The Leven's Test revealed that the assumption of Homogeneity of variance was met for communication [$F(7,192) = 1.05, p > .05$], for decision-making [$F(7,192) = .920, p > .05$] and for coping with stress value [$F(7,192) = 1.305, p > .05$]. The value of p of three variable i.e. $.397 >$

$.05, .492 > .05$ and $.250 > .05$ all the values are more than $.05$ therefore it can be concluded that the researcher has met the assumption of homogeneity of variance and now three-way ANOVA can be applied.

Table 4: Summary of $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design of ANOVA for Decision Making among government and private school students

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
School	24.220	1	24.220	3.742	.055*
Gender	4.539	1	4.539	.701	.403
Family type	.193	1	.193	.030	.863
School * Gender	10.824	1	10.824	1.672	.198
School * Family type	.395	1	.395	.061	.805
Gender * Family type	7.613	1	7.613	1.176	.279
School * Gender * Family type	.057	1	.057	.009	.925
Error	1242.776	192	6.473		
Total	22943.000	200			
Corrected Total	1290.195	199			

* $p < 0.05$

The Table 4 shows the result of decision-making skill of adolescents' students. The value of $F=3.742, p < 0.05$ and therefore results indicates that there was highly significant difference

between the government and private school students of their decision-making skill at ($F=3.742$) 0.05 level.

Table 5: Summary of $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design of ANOVA for Coping with stress among government and private school students

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
School	353.315	1	353.315	5.485	.020*
Gender	9.525	1	9.525	.148	.701
Family type	63.495	1	63.495	.986	.322
School * Gender	271.626	1	271.626	4.217	.041*
School * Family type	2.059	1	2.059	.032	.858
Gender * Family type	.248	1	.248	.004	.951
School * Gender * Family type	11.077	1	11.077	.172	.679
Error	12368.010	192	64.417		
Total	884491.000	200			
Corrected Total	13422.995	199			

* $p < 0.05$

The Table 5 highlights the result of coping with stress of adolescents' students. The value of $F=5.485, p < 0.05$ and therefore results indicates that there was highly significant difference of government and private school

students on the basis of coping with stress at ($F=5.485$) 0.05 level.

Similarly, the interaction impact between school and gender on coping with stress found to be significant, as the value of $F= 4.217, p < 0.05$.

therefore, the value suggests that there is effect of government & private schools coping with stress on male and female students of

Table 6: Summary of 2 × 2 × 2 design of ANOVA for Communication among government and private school students

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
School	718.496	1	718.496	7.137	.008*
Gender	6.892	1	6.892	.068	.794
Family type	523.094	1	523.094	5.196	.024*
School * Gender	352.864	1	352.864	3.505	.063
School * Family type	158.823	1	158.823	1.578	.211
Gender * Family type	707.810	1	707.810	7.031	.009*
School * Gender * Family type	.173	1	.173	.002	.967
Error	19329.089	192	100.672		
Total	628512.000	200			

*p<0.05

The Table 6 highlights the result of communication skill of adolescents' students. The value of F=7.137, p<0.05 and therefore results indicates that there was highly significant difference among the government and private school students on their communication skill at (F=5.485) 0.05 level.

Also, above table shows that there is an impact of communication skill on adolescents' students. The value of F=5.196, p<0.05 and therefore results indicates that there was highly significant difference of joint and nuclear family of adolescent's students on the communication skill at (F=5.196) 0.05 level.

Similarly, the interaction impact between gender and family type on communication skill found to be significant, as the value of F= 7.031, p<0.05. therefore, the value suggests that there is effect of communication on nuclear and joint family of male and female students.

Discussion

Adolescent is very broad range as there is a transition between childhood and adulthood. The transition is rapidly occurring in every part of their life i.e. social, emotional and physical. When child enters in the phase of adolescents, they are continuously facing changes and challenges in different areas of their life. During this phase certain skills needs to be developed in them and these skills are known as 'Life Skills'. According to The United Nations International Children's

Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2018) Life skills are defined as "psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". UNICEF listed ten Life skills i.e. self-Awareness skill, empathy skill, decision making skill, problem solving skill, communication skill, interpersonal relationship skills, creative thinking skill, critical thinking skill, coping with emotions and coping with stress. These skills need to be developed in adolescents' students. But due to rapid advancement in technology and fast development taken place in every sector i.e. home, school and other institutions where adolescents spend their life. These changes tremendously impact the family, society and school in which adolescents' lives. These changes inhibit in the development of these skills which is necessary for the individual.

The purpose of the study was to study the differences in decision-making, communication and coping skills of government and private school students of Delhi and also to study the impact of the influence of the type of family among private & government school students of Delhi. In the present study convenience sampling technique was used to draw the 200 sample from government and private school of Delhi. In government school 71 students were male and 29 students were female and in private school 61 students were male and 39 students were female. For the analysis of data descriptive statistics (means and standard

deviations) were used. A three -way ANOVA was used to examine whether significant effect of independent variable i.e. School type (Government and Private school); Gender (male and female) and Family Type (Nuclear & Joint) on the three dependent variables i.e. Communication, decision making and Coping with Stress exist.

The first hypothesis stated significant difference in the decision-making skill of government and private school students of Delhi. The study revealed that there is a significant difference in the decision-making skill of government and private school students of Delhi.

The second hypothesis stated significant difference in the communication skill of government and private school students of Delhi. The study revealed that there is a significant difference in the communication skill of government and private school students of Delhi.

The third hypothesis stated significant difference in the coping skill of government and private school students of Delhi. The study revealed that there is significant difference in the coping skill of government and private school students of Delhi. This can be supported by the previous research stating that there is a difference between academic stress of adolescents in government & private school (Kaur & Singh, 2019).

The fourth hypothesis stated significant Interaction effect of school & gender; School & family type and Gender & family type when they are compared on the measures of communication skill, decision making skill and coping skill respectively. The result of the present study indicates no significant interaction effect of school & gender; school & family type and gender & family type on the decision-making skill of adolescent students. The findings of the present study show that there is a significant interaction impact between school & gender on the coping with stress skill of adolescents. Also, the study shows that there is no significant interaction effect of school & family type and gender & family type on the coping with stress skill of adolescent students. The findings of the present study revealed that there is a significant interaction impact between gender & family type on the communication skill of adolescent. Also, the study shows that there is no interaction effect of school

& gender and school & family type on the communication skill of adolescent's students.

Conclusion

On the whole it can be concluded that there are differences among government and private school students in their communication skill, coping with stress skill and decision-making skill. The other dimension of the study is to measure the interaction effect of school & gender; school & family type and gender & family type when they are compared on the measures of communication skill, decision making skill and coping skill respectively. The study indicates that there is effect of coping with stress on male and female students of government & private schools. The results of the study indicate that there was highly significant difference of joint and nuclear family of adolescent's students on the communication skill. Also, study indicates that there is effect of communication on nuclear and joint family of male and female students.

Implications

The findings of the study can be utilised by the school, government and non-government bodies to developed the training module for communication skill, coping with stress skill and decision-making skills. To enhance the soft skills or life skills of adolescent's various kinds of training could be imparted in the government and private schools, NGOs, child development centres etc... To improve the communication skill of adolescent's school can involve the parents as the present study shows that there is effect of joint and nuclear family on their communication skill.

Limitations & Suggestions

The sample of the study was only limited to Delhi, further studies can be carried out in other part of country. There are ten life skills which are necessary for the adolescents but due to time limitation only three skills were included in the study.

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