

Research Paper

The Role of Perceived Social Support and Coping Styles in Predicting Aggression and Vulnerability to Corona Stress in Adolescents

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the role of perceived social support and coping styles in predicting aggression and vulnerability to corona stress in adolescents. The research method was a descriptive and correlational study. The results of data analysis by structural equation method showed that the relationship between the dimensions of social support with aggression and perceived stress was negative and significant. As a result, adaptive coping styles and seeking social support were associated with a reduction in negative behaviors, while maladaptive coping styles and not receiving social support lead to maladaptive strategies such as aggression. And if people use maladaptive and avoidant coping styles, the level of aggression increases. It was suggested that adolescent adaptive coping styles and social support be taught to families to reduce adolescent aggression and stress.

Keywords: Adolescents, aggression, coping style, corona stress, perceived social support

Introduction

Corona outbreaks around the world have caused mental health crises and problems (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020), including fear of illness and death, reduced social relationships, stress, anxiety, depression and anger (Shigemura, et al., 2020). These conditions became very important when the consequences of this event in adolescence were examined, because it is a period of rapid physical growth and important psychological changes (Ollendick, et al., 2018). In this regard, one of the common reactions of adolescents to problems and crises was aggression (Goncy, 2020); thus, aggressive adolescents were more likely to be rejected by their peers and receive less social support. Another reaction of adolescents in critical situations was stress. Although previous research has shown that high levels of stress perception lead to poor academic performance, depression, aggression, and serious health problems (Breitenbach, et al., 2021), showed that adaptive coping strategies with stress, there was a weak correlation between illness and high-risk behaviors such as aggression and stress. In contrast, social support was another construct that appeared to affect stress and aggression (Johnstone, et al., 2018). In addition, research has shown that social support modulates the effects of stress with coping styles (Yu, et al., 2020). But these studies were not conducted in times of widespread social crises such as the corona outbreak, and on the other hand, most of their research samples were non-adolescents. Therefore, considering the existing background and the importance of studying stress and aggression and the factors affecting it among adolescents, the hypothesis of the present study was that social support and coping styles can predict aggression and

vulnerability to perceived stress.

Method

The present study was applied research in terms of purpose and descriptive and correlational research in terms of method. According to this research method, the correlation was of structural equation type. The statistical population included 1,500 high school students in the academic year 1400-1399 from the 15th district of Tehran. Using Cochran's sampling formula, 352 people entered the study by voluntary sampling method (due to special health conditions and corona restrictions). The questionnaire link was placed in Telegram channels and Shad groups related to Tehran province and the questionnaires were completed online.

Tools

Coping style of the Corona epidemic: The 24-items questionnaire, made by Dortaj, et al. (2020) with a criterion validity of -0.62 to -0.52 and reliability by Cronbach's alpha of 0.72 to 0.83.

Social support scale: This scale has 12 items having three subscales of family, community and friends. Cronbach's alpha scale of 0.88, 0.83 and 0.91 (Bruwer, et al., 2008, reported by Besharat, 2019).

Perceived Stress Scale: This scale has 14 items, created by Cohen in 1983. Mimura & Griffiths (2004) obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficient between 0.88 and 0.81 (reported by Safaei & Shokri, 2014).

Buss & Perry's aggression: This 29-items tool, created by Buss & Perry (1992), with Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, reported by Samani, (2008).

Results

In this study, 352 high school students were enrolled, of which 167 were boys and 185 were girls. 138 people were tenth, 146 people were eleventh and 68 people were twelfth of high school. Descriptive statistics of research variables were also presented in the following tables. Also, to evaluate the normality of research data distribution in each variable, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used, which showed that the assumption is valid and parametric tests can be used.

Table 1 - Descriptive statistics of research variables

Variable	Mean	Sd	K-S	Sig	Variable	Mean	Sd	K-S	Sig
Coping style	66.35	7.29	2.02	0.11	social support	35.17	7.81	1.16	0.15
Confrontation	16.45	4.69	2.18	0.11	Family	9395	7.25	1.26	0.22
Avoidance	24.67	5.05	1.14	0.14	Friends	13.36	7.64	1.35	0.29
denial	15.48	4.27	1.05	0.23	Community	11.84	6.93	2.41	0.26
responsibility	9.75	4.10	1.21	0.12	Stress	60.09	13.99	1.51	0.19
aggression	118.35	12.84	1.25	0.16					

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to answer the research questions about the relationship between the studied variables. The relationship between perceived stress and all dimensions of social support was negative correlation. In addition, a negative and relatively high relationship was observed between the dimensions of social support and aggression. On the other hand, coping and responsibility styles (one of the components of coping styles) had a negative

relationship and avoidance and denial styles had a positive and significant relationship with perceived stress and aggression.

It should be noted that in a favorable structural model, the ratio of chi-square to degree of freedom (X^2/df) is less than 3, root mean squares of residual (RMSR) less than 0.05, good fit index (GFI) greater than 0.95 Adaptive fit index (CFI) greater than 0.9, incremental fit index (IFI) greater than 0.95 and root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) less than 0.08. In the present model, RMR and RMSEA in this model are 0.051 and 0.04, respectively, and X^2/df is 2.54. Also, the other indicators were close to one, which indicated a good fit of the pattern. Accordingly, the results related to the fit indices indicated the acceptable fit of the model with the data of the present study.

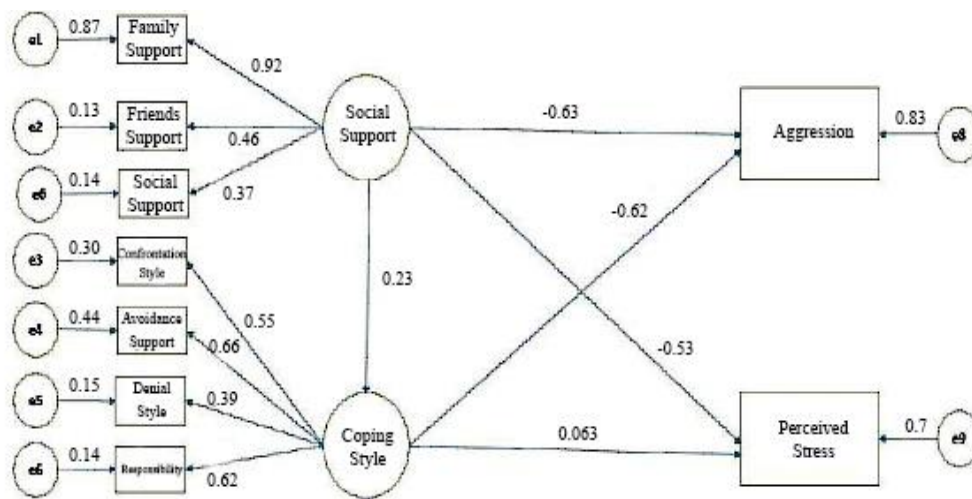


Figure 1 - The final research model

The results presented in Table 3 showed that social support and coping styles could directly and indirectly affect adolescents' perceived aggression and stress.

Table 3. Direct coefficients and general effect of variables on each other

path	Total effect			Indirect coefficients		
	coefficient	t value	Sig	coefficient	t value	Sig
Social support and aggression	-0.834**	3.618	0.001	0.194*	2.027	0.043
Social support and stress	-0.692**	2.679	0.009	0.074*	2.049	0.041
Coping style and aggression	0.863**	3.251	0.002	0.190*	2.436	0.015
Coping style and stress	0.846**	3.168	0.001	0.164*	2.415	0.018

Discussion and conclusion

The present study showed that social support and coping styles predicted aggression and vulnerability to coronary stress in adolescents. Explaining this finding, social support led people to believe that they were cared for and valued by others. Family often provided a sense of security, but friends helped reduce isolation. Therefore, by understanding social support, it reduced stress levels and aggression (Yu, et al., 2020). On the other hand, in adaptive coping styles, the individual focuses on the stressful element and tries to change the stressful

relationship between himself and the environment in order to reduce stress and aggression by examining the dimensions and using problem-solving strategies, such as seeking help from friends and professionals. Therefore, it is necessary to teach adolescents and their families about adaptive coping styles and how to provide social support. Finally, it should be noted that due to the health conditions caused by the corona pandemic, it was not possible to collect data in person. The need to review the above research in person and to ensure the results is necessary.

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Conflicts of interest

Authors found no conflict of interests.



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