

Family Support in Relation to Future-Oriented Coping Among Research Scholars.

Afreen Jan¹, Dr. Mohd. Muzamil²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Kashmir

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Kashmir

Abstract:

Dealing with stress comes with more and more future-oriented processes whereby people anticipate and mobilise resources as they preempt future challenges. The current study was based on the Conservation of Resources theory and focused on the nature of the interaction between family support and future-oriented (proactive) coping in the case of Indian research scholars, who are vulnerable to chronic academic stress and uncertainty. Relied on a quantitative, cross-sectional design, the sample of the study comprised 80 research scholars aged between 25 and 40 years, who were enrolled in universities located in Kashmir to take part in the study using standardized self-report scales of family support and proactive coping. According to descriptive analyses, both perceived family support and proactive coping were relatively high. The Pearson correlation and regression results showed that family support and proactive coping had a significant positive relationship, and family support was a powerful predictor of proactive coping. Group comparisons also revealed that male scholars believed that they used more proactive coping than females, that older scholars had more perceived family support and higher patterned coping orientations; and no significant disparities were noted with respect to birth order. In general, the results have underlined the role of family support as an important psychosocial resource that enables anticipatory, goal-oriented coping in research scholars who navigate through strenuous academic settings. This paper highlights the significance of considering family-contextualization of institutional support services and intervention to enhance proactive coping, resilience, and persistence among scholars.

Keywords: Proactive coping, Future-oriented coping, Family support.

Introduction:

Too stressful demands can be the consequence of traumatic early loss or a constantly negative experience. They might also manifest themselves in the near future as being a menace to a person who feels that they cannot cope with the oncoming tasks using the resources available to them. The process of human coping cannot be downgraded to primitive coping mechanisms such as relaxation or fight and flight stress responses due to the intricacy of stressful situations in social situations. The requirements are also time-dependent and the subjective certainty of the events among other factors which dictate coping.

Lazarus and Folkman (1988) have identified coping as the mental and behavioural responses that individuals have to respond to the internal and external demands of stressful circumstances. Most coping research focuses on how individuals respond to historical or current occurrences, despite the fact that the principle underlying cognitive theories of stress is the expected harm or loss, which is the notion of threat. According to Aspinwall and Taylor (1997), the recent development on coping studies went into the depth of how individuals prepare to cope with an

upcoming stressor such as a pending test, a planned surgery or a layoff. Such anticipatory response is referred to as proactive coping mechanism (Aspinwall and Taylor, 1997). Their model suggests proactive coping as comprising of five interrelated components namely (a) the accumulation of temporal, financial, and social resources in order to prevent or mitigate future losses (Hobfoll, 1989); (b) recognising the possible stressors; (c) pre-assessment of these stressors; (d) initial coping efforts; and (e) feedback on the effectiveness of these efforts (Aspinwall, 2003).

Schwarzer and Knoll (2003) distinguish between different forms of Future-oriented coping: preventive coping (handling uncertain threats in the distant future, e.g., getting into an exercise regimen in order to prevent age-related conditions, such as osteoporosis); anticipatory coping (readying a future happening that is very likely to come); and proactive coping (readying challenges in the future that may facilitate individual development). Though they also, like Aspinwall and Taylor (1997), consider the importance of accumulating resources, they also stress the way the proactive individuals generate opportunities of growth and utilize the resources available to them to achieve the challenging yet highly sought goals that stimulate personal growth. Schwarzer and Taubert, 2002 explain that Anticipatory coping is special in its sense of dealing with a critical event that has not yet occurred. It denotes efforts to hold back something that is about to create a threat to people as they prepare to face something that is certain to occur or highly probable to occur. A few examples include, public speaking, dental visits, beginning a family, exams, job interviews, increased workloads, promotions, layoffs in the workplace, and retirement. It is also possible that somebody might be injured, or lose an item, and thus, people must manage the perceived risk. The situation may be considered as difficult, threatening, or both, and they may even be beneficial. The coping mechanisms can involve a solution to the existing problem by investing resources, working harder or seeking help. Another option could involve maintaining wellbeing despite the threat through methods such as de-escalating the situation, distraction, or seeking other people to validate them. Accordingly, anticipatory coping is the process of managing known risks through the allocation of resources to prevent or reduce the stressor or to maximize the benefits that are expected.

Preventive coping involves making plans against long-term uncertainties. This should be aimed at establishing a general resistance resource so that the effects and the severity of stress may be reduced in future whether by reducing the probability of stressful events happening or reduce the effects of stress happening. This type of coping involves the preparation of the eventualities that may happen in the future such as illness, disaster, retirement, or job loss. Preventive coping is reflected in behaviours like well-insurance, money savings, and maintenance of social relationships since they offer a way of security in unanticipated future demands. The other dimension of preventive coping is the general knowledge that something can transpire, and it makes people prepare to cope with various situations. The individuals acquire skills, execute resources, and enhance their psychological strengths to establish the general resistance resources (Schwarzer and Taubert, 2002).

Future-oriented coping/ Proactive coping does not include negative evaluation like harm, loss or threat. Instead, it involves trying to develop general resources that will help in achieving challenging goals and personal growth. Proactive individuals do not threaten the opportunities,

demands and risks of the future, but view them as personal challenges. Coping in this situation is more about goal management rather than risk management. The proactive individuals will act proactively and provide growth opportunities rather than respond to circumstances. They desire to lead better lives and have resources that will enable them to develop and work efficiently. Proactive improvements in performance and living conditions are perceived as the way of seeking meaning or purpose in life. In this context, stress is perceived as positive energy and enthusiasm in life (Schwarzer and Taubert, 2002).

There are also some key features of proactive coping that are identified as (1) the combination of proactive goal achievement and identification and exploitation of social resources; (2) the assistance of proactive emotional coping to aid self-regulatory goal achievement; and (3) the integration of planning and preventive strategies with proactive self-regulation to achieve goals (Greenglass, 2002).

One of the major determinants of improving the capacity of people to manage future is social support. It can be seen to strengthen proactive coping, and the result is better role functioning, and such processes seem to be constant over time (Davis, & Brekke, 2014). It is a significant aspect that connects proactive coping and growth. In this respect, individuals engaging in proactive coping have higher chances of seeking and receiving social support which helps them to experience personal growth and development (Rogalla, 2020).

One of the major forms of social support is the family. In this regard, family support is especially important to assist people in coping and planning their future. According to the theory of ecosystem by Bronfenbrenner (1986), the family of an individual is the most immediate and influential factor on an individual. Future-oriented coping and family support have a significant association since the latter could be highly significant to assist individuals in overcoming and preparing to address life challenges. Gore and Eckenrode (1994) discovered that family support assists individuals to cope by making them feel stable emotionally, provide useful assistance, and mentor them as they solve their problems. Within this supportive environment, people will be able to develop the skills and confidence that they require to engage in proactive and preventive coping mechanisms. Close and personal relationships have been associated with the reduced risk of developing various mental and physical diseases (Brown and Harris, 2012; Cohen and Wills, 1985).

Adaptation can be facilitated through support because it influences coping. Close companion support has a direct effect on coping behaviour by altering the cognitive evaluation of stressors or coping means in a person. Emotional support will be able to promote the adoption of coping strategies more effectively by indirectly raising self-efficacy and self-esteem. Different sources of support have different effects on coping; the family support maintains emotional control, whereas support by significant other outside family can cause new coping styles (Fondacaro, & Moos, 1987).

Family support enhances the coping and functioning capacity of people. Communication with the supporting families assists children in being more adaptive as it aids them in attaining relevant skills and coping strategies. They are also helpful in avoiding the unwanted life circumstances and guarding against challenges that do not suit their development stage.

Even the inappropriate challenges can be overcome by strong communication skills in the family (Wills, et al. 2014). Good communication and strong emotional bonds within a family particularly make families effective in their encouragement of adaptive coping mechanisms, assert Schwarzer and Knoll (2003). Such families provide children and adolescents to train and learn coping skills in a secure setting, equipping them to handle stress at present and in the future. Moreover, family support enhances resilience in individuals, which enhances their tendency to engage in proactive coping mechanisms such as anticipating potential stressors and planning them in advance (Aspinwall and Taylor, 1997).

Parental autonomy support has a strong positive relationship with future-oriented coping and directs parental autonomy support to future-oriented coping and indirectly through both individual and joint mediation of future time perspective and meaning in life (Zeng, et al. 2022). Farrel and Barnes (1993) emphasize the importance of support and quality communication in development of adolescents. Families that have grown up and entered adulthood are required to communicate with their children as they grow up to assist young adults to find their way in the outside world (Scabini, 1995). According to Scabini et al. (2006), sufficient support is associated with favourable, open, and problem free communication between young adults and older adolescents and parents. According to Ben-Zur (2003), Fluori and Buchanam (2002), positive relationships with their parents that are characterized by proximity and open lines of communication give adolescents personal resources that enhance their coping strategies and the quality of their adult life.

Proactive or future-oriented coping minimises distress and predicts positive results. Social support is a key factor in overcoming stress. Vaculíková and Soukup, (2019) conducted a cross-sectional study of 482 full-time students in public universities through path analysis to test a model that hypothesized a positive relationship between proactive coping and well-being and social support. The results indicated that there was a negative correlation between depression and well-being; proactive coping and social support also have a direct positive effect on well-being. Proactive coping mediated a part of the relationship between social support and well-being.

Overall, family support is important in future-focused coping since it provides individuals with the psychological and practical resources that allow them to make predictions, once again, anticipate and respond to future obstacles. Thus, we intend to examine Family Support and Future-Oriented Coping in connection with Future-Oriented Coping amongst Research Scholars. Due to the specific stressors affecting them and the significant value that family support may have in their academic and personal growth, research scholars have been chosen as the population of the study. The pressure is usually enormous on the researcher to comply with deadlines, do well, and compete toward a better future (Seymour, 1997). To deal with stress and maintain productivity, they have to deal with a very competitive environment, which requires them to have effective coping strategies (Stubb et al., 2011). The family support, in particular, may be particularly beneficial in providing the emotional stability, helpful support, and problem-solving guidance that such a successful future-oriented coping requires (Bronfenbrenner, 2013; Gore and Eckenrode, 1996). Moreover, research has found out that social support together with the one provided by family enhances coping and overall well-

being. This is particularly relevant to the researchers, who often experience stress and isolation (Davis and Brekke, 2014; Rogalla, 2020). A new knowledge of the role of family support in this context can serve to assist research scholars in their personal and academic lives to a greater extent, improving their outcomes and reducing the attrition rates (Gardner, 2009).

Theoretical Framework:

Hobfoll (1998) theory of Conservation of Resources (COR) can be used effectively to understand the role that social support performs in future-oriented coping. According to the COR theory, individuals desire to possess, retain, and protect valuable resources.

Research scholars may be particularly in need of family support as they often feel extremely stressed and drain resources. This aid may be both financial and emotional and material, such as consolation and assurance, which may assist students overcome stress and pursue their long-term goals. To have a supportive family network, the resources needed to support the family in difficult moments are required over time to create and maintain. Through the lens of COR theory, by seeing the dynamics of family support, we can discuss how family resources are utilized to enhance their future-oriented coping strategies more carefully.

COR theory, nevertheless, also focuses on the potential costs of social support. The resources of family members are not necessarily the most efficient and can sometimes have a negative impact. Reliance on family to help can as well result in social obligations, which may be burdensome and cause strains in relationships. Getting assistance is not quick and scholars may find it challenging to feel independent and self-assured particularly in societies that hold independence in high regard.

Objectives:

- To assess family support among research scholars.
- To assess future-oriented coping among research scholars.
- To assess the relationship between family support and future-oriented coping.
- To assess the understudy constructs with respect to various demographic variables (Gender, Domicile, Family Type, Birth order, Age and Marital status).

Method:

This study used a quantitative research design to examine family Support in relation to future-Oriented Coping among research Scholars. The study participants consisted of --- research scholars aged 25-40 enrolled in the different Universities of Kashmir. The survey was administered online, and responses were collected anonymously.

Measures:

Future-Oriented Coping\Proactive Coping:

Proactive coping was assessed using 14 items from a subscale of the Proactive Coping Inventory (PCI) (Greenglass, Schwarzer, & Taubert, 1999). The instrument's validity, established through factor analyses, has been confirmed in numerous stress and coping studies (e.g., Greenglass, 2002; Solcova, Lukavsky, & Greenglass, 2006).

Family Support:

Family Support was assessed using the family support function scale consisting of 17 items by Hu, et al. 2007 having good test-retest and internal consistency reliability (Pearson correlation coefficient: 0.89, $P < 0.05$; Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.87).

Results and Interpretation:**Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive analyses were conducted to examine the central tendency, variability, and distribution of the two primary variables — Family Support and Proactive Coping. Participants reported moderately high levels of Family Support ($M = 48.6$, $SD = 6.30$) and Proactive Coping ($M = 42.0$, $SD = 4.89$). Both distributions were slightly negatively skewed, indicating a tendency toward higher scores. This suggests that most participants perceived strong family support and demonstrated proactive approaches in managing stress and challenges.

Table no. 1
Descriptive Statistics of Family Support and Proactive Coping

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness
Family Support	80	48.6	6.30	32.0	57.0	-0.77
Proactive Coping	80	42.0	4.89	33.0	53.0	-0.06

*Note. * Negative skewness values indicate higher levels of perceived Family Support and Proactive Coping.

Table no. 2
Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation was computed to examine the relationship between Family Support and Proactive Coping. Results revealed a significant positive correlation, $r(78) = .29$, $p = .009$, indicating that individuals who perceived greater family support were more likely to engage in proactive coping behaviors. This demonstrates that emotional and instrumental resources within the family context positively influence adaptive stress management strategies.

Pearson Correlation Matrix

	Family Support	Proactive Coping
Family Support	—	.29**
Proactive Coping	.29**	—

*Note. * ** $p < .01$.

Linear Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression was conducted to assess whether Family Support predicted Proactive Coping. The model was significant, $F(1, 78) = 7.24$, $p = .009$, with $R^2 = .085$, indicating that Family Support accounted for approximately 8.5% of the variance in Proactive Coping. The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.23$, $SE = 0.084$, $t = 2.69$, $p = .009$) suggests that for every one-unit increase in Family Support, Proactive Coping scores increase by 0.23 points. This supports the notion that supportive family structures contribute to enhanced coping

orientations.

Table no. 3

Simple Linear Regression Predicting Proactive Coping from Family Support

Predictor	B	SE B	t	p
Constant	31.05	4.12	7.53	< .001
Family Support	0.23	0.084	2.69	.009

*Note. * $R^2 = .085$, $F(1,78) = 7.24$, $p = .009$.

Independent Samples t-Tests

Independent samples t-tests were performed to compare mean differences in Family Support and Proactive Coping across groups. A significant difference was observed for Proactive Coping, $t(78) = 2.98$, $p = .004$, where males ($M = 44.5$, $SD = 5.54$) reported higher levels than females ($M = 41.1$, $SD = 4.30$). No significant differences were found for Family Support. These findings suggest that demographic or contextual groupings may influence coping behavior more strongly than perceived support.

Table no. 4

Independent Samples t-Test for Group Differences in Family Support and Proactive Coping

Variable	Male (M, SD)	Female (M, SD)	t(78)	p	Cohen's d
Family Support	50.2 (6.28)	48.0 (6.27)	1.37	.175	—
Proactive Coping	44.5 (5.54)	41.1 (4.30)	2.98	.004	0.52

One-Way ANOVA

One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to assess group differences in Family Support and Proactive Coping across Birth Order and Age categories. No significant effects were observed for Birth Order; however, a significant effect of Age was found for Family Support, $F(2, 76) = 6.25$, $p = .003$, and a marginal trend for Proactive Coping, $F(2, 76) = 2.45$, $p = .093$. Post hoc comparisons indicated that older participants reported significantly higher Family Support ($p = .003$) and Proactive Coping ($p = .035$) than younger participants, suggesting that maturity and life experience contribute to improved coping and perceived support.

Table no. 5

One-Way ANOVA Results for Birth Order and Age

Factor	Variable	F	df	p
Birth Order	Family Support	2.36	2, 42.6	.107
Birth Order	Proactive Coping	1.10	2, 37.2	.342
Age	Family Support	6.25	2, 76	.003
Age	Proactive Coping	2.45	2, 76	.093

Conclusion:

The current research aimed to improve the current understanding of future-oriented (proactive) coping directly by empirically testing the role of family support as a crucial psychosocial resource in the context of Indian research scholars, which is a group of participants that are uniquely placed at the border of the sustained academic demands, career insecurities, and developmental changes. Based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the results present strong evidence that there is a positive relationship between perceived family support and proactive coping orientations and that the former is a significant predictor of the latter. By so doing, this study supports the idea that coping with future challenges is not necessarily an individual process but a process entrenched in relational and contextual resource systems. As expected in theory, the research scholars that indicated greater family support had a higher probability of involvement in anticipatory, goal-oriented coping strategies to achieve personal development and preventing stress. Even though the contribution of family support to the variance of proactive coping was somewhat strong, their impact is theoretically significant by the virtue of the multifactorial nature of coping mechanisms. Family support can be conceptualized within COR as a resource that can be replenished and can be viewed as a stable resource that helps accumulate resources, insurances against resource loss, and helps individuals invest in strategies that help them cope in the future. Such resource reservoirs seem especially topical to research scholars who have to endure prolonged durations of uncertainty, evaluative pressure and role strain. These results were further refined by the demographic analyses. The findings of differences in gender in proactive coping despite equal perceived family support also imply the possibility that the mobilisation of support to coping behaviour could be influenced by sociocultural norms and gendered patterns of self-regulation. The differences between younger and older scholars with older scholars claiming more family support and more developed coping tendencies suggest that maturity, learning through experience and changing family dynamics serve to enhance perceived resources and adaptive coping abilities as one ages. The lack of birth-order effects is another point that serves to emphasize that family structure, but the perceived quality and efficacy of familial support, is what is psychologically meaningful in future-oriented coping. Combined, the outcomes highlight the importance of family support as a supporting yet less well-known factor of proactive coping. Favourable family conditions, which are characterized by emotional accessibility, approval, and practical support, seem to create a psychological climate according to which research scholars are able to reframe future demands as challenges that are to be coped with and not as threats that are to be feared. This ability to be proactive, plan, and foresee is specifically important in research training settings that are characterized by uncertainty, delayed gratification, and high-performance standards. In applied perspective, the results have significant implications on institutions of higher learning and mental health practitioners. The support systems that are given to research scholars at the institutional level can be enhanced by being more ecological in the sense that they need to be able to recognize the role of the family systems in addition to the academic and organizational factors. The psychoeducational interventions to enhance the proactive coping strength can be supported by the efforts to engage in adaptive family communication, realistic expectation-setting, and emotional validation of

the academic experiences of the scholars. This kind of integrative strategy can lead to resilience, burnout reduction and retention in doctoral and research training programs.

Limitations:

There are a number of limitations that should be considered. The cross-sectional nature limits the causal inference and the use of self-report measures can bring about shared method variance. Moreover, the sample is relatively small and regionally specific, which restricts the potential to be generalized. The future studies should utilize longitudinal and mixed-method designs to identify dynamic family support and coping variations at different points of the research training, and investigate family support interaction with other important resources, including supervisory relationships, peer networks, and institutional climate. In spite of these shortcomings, the current research paper has a value addition to the literature on proactive coping in that it places the family support as a key resource in the lives of research scholars. It emphasises the fact that families do not just serve as platforms of emotional solace, but they are long-term resource systems that influence the way people dream, plan and manoeuvre their way into the future. Enhancing this resource nexus can constitute a crucial avenue of contributing to psychological well-being, enduring drive, and academic achievement in the long run for scholars who are working in challenging and unpredictable educational environments.

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