

Comparing Resilience and Coping Among Emerging, Young, and Middle Adults

Donna I. Dumitrescu, Natasha L. Gallant

Introduction:

- Resilience and adaptive coping are two attributes that are essential to dealing with life's perpetual stressors.
- Evidence supports that middle-aged adults are more resilient and better at coping with stressors than their younger counterparts (Minahan et al., 2021; Young et al., 2021).
- Nevertheless, young adults who use problem- and emotion-focused coping successfully cope with stressors (Howerton & Van Gundy, 2009; Kohn-Wood et al., 2012).
- The present study was aimed at better understanding resilience and coping in younger and middle-aged adults in Saskatchewan by examining whether certain age groups demonstrated higher levels of coping and resilience, and the factors (adverse events, coping style, social support, wisdom) that might be connected to these higher levels.

Methods:

- Questionnaires included the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008), Brief COPE Scale (Carver et al., 1989), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al., 1990), Jeste-Thomas Wisdom Index (Jeste et al., 2021), Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983), and Life Events Checklist-5 Standard (Weathers et al., 2013).
- Participants completed a 15-minute survey using Qualtrics.
- A total of 297 adults were included in the final sample, with 67 emerging adults (18-25 years), 164 younger adults (26-44 years), and 66 middle-aged adults (45-64 years).
- ANOVAs and simple linear regressions were conducted.

Results from ANOVAs:

- **Emotion-Focused Coping:** Emerging and young adults had higher levels of emotion-focused coping than middle-aged adults, $p = .002$ and $p < .001$, respectively.
- **Avoidant Coping:** Emerging adults and young adults had a higher prevalence of avoidant coping than middle-aged adults, $p < .001$ and $p < .001$, respectively.
- **Wisdom:** Middle-aged adults had the highest level of wisdom compared with emerging adults and young adults, $p = .011$ and $p < .001$.
 - Emerging adults had the lowest decisiveness compared with young and middle-aged adults $p = .05$ and $p = .002$, respectively.
 - Middle-aged adults had higher levels of prosocial behaviours than young and emerging adults, $p = .031$ and $p = .001$, respectively.
 - Younger adults reported having less insight than emerging adults and middle-aged adults, $p = .015$ and $p < .001$, respectively.
- **Perceived Stress:** Emerging adults reported higher levels of perceived stress compared with young and middle-aged adults, $p < .001$ and $p < .001$, respectively.
 - Emerging adults exhibited higher levels of perceived helplessness than younger and middle-aged adults, $p < .001$ and $p < .001$, respectively, while younger adults exhibited greater levels of perceived helplessness than middle-aged adults, $p = .032$.
- No significant differences were identified among the groups for **resilience, problem-focused coping, social support, and adverse life experiences.**

Results from Simple Linear Regressions:

- **Social support** and **wisdom** influence **overall coping** above and beyond age, $b^* = .305$; $b^* = -.174$, respectively.
- **Social support, wisdom, and perceived stress** predict greater levels of **emotion-focused coping** above and beyond age, $b^* = .338$; $b^* = -.135$; $b^* = .115$, respectively.
- **Wisdom** predicts lower levels of **avoidant coping** above and beyond age, $b^* = -.496$.

Discussion:

- While middle-aged adults did not differ from emerging and early adults on their use of problem-focused coping, they did use emotion-focused and avoidant coping to a lesser extent than their younger counterparts.
- Middle-aged adults also demonstrated greater levels of wisdom and lower levels of perceived stress, and these psychological factors may contribute to better coping strategies.
- Social support, wisdom, and perceived stress appear to be important psychological factors contributing to coping across emerging to middle-aged adults.

