

**COPING STRATEGIES AS DETERMINANT OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS AMONG BREAST
CANCER PATIENTS**



By

SABA MUMTAZ

A thesis

Presented to the Bahria University, Islamabad

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of

Masters of Philosophy

2014

BAHRIA UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD

APPROVAL SHEET

SUBMISSION OF HIGHER RESEARCH DEGREE THESIS

Candidate's Name: Saba Mumtaz
Discipline: Clinical Psychology (M. Phil)
Faculty/Department: Institute of Professional Psychology

I hereby certify that the above candidate's work, including the thesis, has been completed to my satisfaction and that the thesis is in a format and of an editorial standard recognized by the faculty / department as appropriate for examination.

Signature:

Principal Supervisor: _____

Date: _____

The undersigned, certifies that

1. The candidate presented at a pre-completion seminar, an overview and synthesis of major findings of the thesis, and that the research is of a standard and extent appropriate for submission as a thesis.
2. I have checked the candidate's thesis and its scope, format, and editorial standards are recognized by the faculty / department as appropriate.

Signature:

Dean/Head of Faculty/Department: Saima I. Zaheer

Date: _____

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT	i
APPROVAL SHEET	ii
AUTHENTICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iv
DEDICATION.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi

CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the research	2
1.2 Gaps in Breast Cancer Research in Pakistan and Present Study	3
1.3 Problem Statement	5
1.4 Objectives of the Study	6
1.5 Research Questions	7
1.6 Significance of the Study	7
1.7 Structure of the Thesis	8
1.8 Definition of Key Terms	10
1.9 Summary	11

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Stress and Coping.....	12
2.2 Types of Coping Strategies	16
2.3 Coping with Cancer and Other Chronic Illnesses	24

2.4 Coping Strategies Used by Breast Cancer Patients.....	31
2.5 Coping Strategies and Psychological Distress among breast cancer patients.....	49
2.6 Summary	
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
3.1 The construct of Psychological Distress.....	58
3.2 Transactional Model of Stress and Coping in Breast Cancer.....	59
3.3 Hypotheses	62
3.4 Summary	63
4. METHODOLOGY	
4.1 Research Design	64
4.2 Sample	64
4.3 Procedure	65
4.4 Measures	67
4.5 Summary	71
5. RESULTS	
5.1 Description of the Data	74
5.2 Descriptive Statistics	82
5.3 Summary	89
6. DISCUSSION	
6.1 Conclusion	96
6.2 Implications	97
6.3 Limitations	98
6.4 Recommendations	99

REFERENCES101

APPENDIXES

- A. Turnitin Originality Report
- B. Research Permission Letter
- C. Permission Letters for Obtaining Research Instruments
- D. Consent Form in Urdu
- E. Demographic Information Form in Urdu
- F. Brief COPE Urdu Version
- G. General Health Questionnaire-28 Urdu Version

ABSTRACT

There has been a lot of research in the past decade on the coping strategies used by breast cancer patients in the west. However, in developing countries, the research work in this context is yet to be established, especially in Pakistan. Breast cancer is one of the most common female malignancies in Pakistan (Burgri et al., 2006), with approximately 90,000 cases yearly (Pink Ribbon Campaign, 2004). The disease has various physical and psychological implications. In such circumstances, a patient's coping strategies can play a crucial role in determining their overall mental health and specifically the level of psychological distress experienced by them.

The purpose of the present study was to analyze the nature of relationship between coping strategies and psychological distress among breast cancer patients in terms of its strength and predictability. For the purpose of this study a quantitative research approach was employed and a sample of 100 female breast cancer patients was taken between the ages of 30 and 60 years, with a mean age of 46.72 years. The participants mostly belonged to the middle class with at least matriculation level of education. Data collection was done using a consent form, demographic information form, Brief COPE Urdu version (Riaz & Agha, 2012) and General Health Questionnaire-28 Urdu version (Riaz & Raza, 1998). It was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between coping strategies and psychological distress and that coping strategies would predict the level of psychological distress.

Findings of the present study indicated a weak negative, non significant correlation between problem-focused coping strategies and psychological distress ($r = -.150, p > 0.05$).

Analysis revealed a weak positive, significant relationship ($r = .233$, $p < 0.05$) between emotion-focused coping strategies and psychological distress. Furthermore, predictive value of the independent variable of coping strategies for dependent variable of psychological distress was also found to be significant ($R^2 = .117$, $p < 0.05$).

Significant implications of the current study include the development of a modified theoretical framework for conceptualizing stress, coping and its impact on psychological distress in the context of breast cancer, giving a deeper insight into the coping mechanisms of breast cancer patients. Recommendations for future research have been discussed focusing on the sample and measures that can be broadened to achieve higher generalizability and deeper understanding of the relationship between the two variables.