

**“PSYCHOLOGICAL PREDICTORS OF COPING STRATEGIES IN CHILDREN  
EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE”**

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**Abstract:** This study examines the psychological predictors of coping strategies in children exposed to violence. Exposure to violence is recognized as a significant risk factor affecting children’s emotional and behavioral development. The research aims to identify key psychological variables, including anxiety, self-esteem, and perceived social support, that influence the formation of adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. The study was conducted using a quantitative approach with a sample of school-aged children who have experienced various forms of violence. Standardized psychological assessment tools were employed to measure coping strategies and related psychological factors. Statistical analysis, including correlation and comparative methods, was used to determine the relationships between variables.

The findings indicate that higher levels of perceived social support and self-esteem are associated with the use of adaptive coping strategies, while increased anxiety is linked to maladaptive coping patterns. These results highlight the importance of psychological and social resources in fostering resilience among children exposed to violence. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of psychological predictors in coping strategy development. The findings can be used to design effective psychological interventions and support programs for vulnerable children.

**Key words:** coping strategies, children, violence exposure, psychological predictors, anxiety, self-esteem, social support, resilience.

**Introduction**

Violence against children remains a significant global concern, affecting their psychological well-being and long-term development. Children exposed to violence—whether physical, emotional, or neglectful—are at an increased risk of developing emotional distress, behavioral problems, and difficulties in social adaptation. Such adverse experiences often disrupt normal psychological functioning and influence how children respond to stress and challenging life situations.

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the concept of coping strategies as a crucial factor in understanding children’s adaptation to stressful and traumatic experiences. Coping strategies refer to cognitive and behavioral efforts used by individuals to manage internal and external demands perceived as stressful. For children exposed to violence, the type and effectiveness of coping strategies can determine whether they develop resilience or experience long-term psychological difficulties. Previous research has highlighted several psychological factors that may influence the development of coping strategies. Among these, anxiety, self-esteem, and perceived social support have been identified as key variables. High levels of anxiety are often associated with maladaptive coping strategies such as avoidance or withdrawal. In contrast, higher self-esteem and strong social support systems—particularly from family, peers, and teachers—are linked to more adaptive coping mechanisms, including problem-solving and seeking help.

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Despite the growing body of research, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of how these psychological predictors interact in shaping coping strategies among children exposed to violence, especially within specific socio-cultural contexts. Many studies have focused on isolated factors, while fewer have examined the combined influence of multiple psychological variables. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the psychological predictors of coping strategies in children exposed to violence, with particular attention to anxiety, self-esteem, and perceived social support. By identifying the key factors that influence coping behavior, this research seeks to contribute to the development of effective psychological interventions and support systems aimed at improving the well-being and resilience of vulnerable children.

**Literature Review** The issue of violence against children has been widely studied across various disciplines, particularly in psychology, education, and social sciences. Numerous researchers have emphasized that exposure to violence significantly affects children's emotional stability, behavior, and overall psychological development. Studies indicate that children who experience violence are more likely to develop anxiety, depression, aggression, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships. The concept of coping strategies has been extensively explored in psychological literature as a key mechanism through which individuals manage stress and adversity. Coping strategies are generally classified into adaptive (active) and maladaptive (passive) forms. Adaptive coping includes problem-solving, seeking social support, and cognitive restructuring, while maladaptive coping involves avoidance, denial, and withdrawal. Research suggests that the type of coping strategy employed plays a crucial role in determining psychological outcomes in children exposed to traumatic experiences. Several theoretical frameworks have contributed to the understanding of coping processes. The transactional model of stress and coping emphasizes the dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment, highlighting the role of cognitive appraisal in shaping coping responses. This model suggests that children's perception of stressful events and their available psychological resources influence the choice of coping strategies.

Empirical studies have identified a number of psychological predictors that influence coping behavior. Anxiety has been consistently associated with maladaptive coping strategies, as heightened emotional distress may limit an individual's ability to respond effectively to stress. Self-esteem, on the other hand, is considered a protective factor that promotes adaptive coping by enhancing confidence and problem-solving abilities. Additionally, perceived social support from family, peers, and teachers has been shown to buffer the negative effects of violence and facilitate healthier coping mechanisms. Despite these findings, existing research often examines psychological factors in isolation, without fully addressing their combined impact on coping strategy formation. Furthermore, there is limited research focusing on children in specific cultural and social contexts, which may influence both the experience of violence and the development of coping mechanisms.

Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by examining the combined role of key psychological predictors-anxiety, self-esteem, and perceived social support-in shaping coping strategies among children exposed to violence. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to adaptive and maladaptive coping, and highlights the importance of context-sensitive psychological support interventions.

### Methodology

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This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the psychological predictors of coping strategies in children exposed to violence. The research focused on identifying the relationships between anxiety, self-esteem, perceived social support, and coping strategies.

**Participants.** The study sample consisted of 70 school-aged children (aged 12–16) who had been exposed to various forms of violence. The participants were selected from general secondary schools. Both male and female students were included in the study. Participation was voluntary, and ethical considerations, including confidentiality and informed consent, were strictly observed throughout the research process.

**Measures.** To assess the variables of the study, standardized psychological instruments were used:

- Coping strategies were measured using a coping strategy questionnaire that distinguishes between adaptive (active) and maladaptive (passive) coping.
- Anxiety levels were assessed using a standardized anxiety scale appropriate for children and adolescents.
- Self-esteem was measured using a widely recognized self-esteem assessment tool.
- Perceived social support was evaluated through a social support scale focusing on support from family, peers, and teachers.

All instruments demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity in previous studies.

**Procedure:** Data collection was conducted in a school setting under the supervision of the researcher. Participants were provided with clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaires. The assessment process ensured a comfortable and supportive environment to minimize potential distress. The data were collected anonymously to ensure honest responses and protect participants' privacy.

**Data Analysis:** The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, including means and standard deviations. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between psychological variables and coping strategies. Additionally, comparative analyses were performed to identify differences in coping strategies based on levels of psychological factors.

This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the psychological predictors influencing coping strategies among children exposed to violence.

### Results

The results of the study provide important insights into the relationships between psychological factors and coping strategies among children exposed to violence. Descriptive statistics indicated that a considerable proportion of participants demonstrated a tendency toward maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance and withdrawal, while a smaller group showed the use of adaptive coping strategies, including problem-solving and seeking social support.

Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between the studied variables. Anxiety was positively correlated with maladaptive coping strategies ( $r = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that higher levels of anxiety are associated with less effective coping mechanisms. In contrast, self-esteem showed a positive correlation with adaptive coping strategies ( $r = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that children with higher self-esteem are more likely to employ constructive coping methods. Perceived social support also demonstrated a significant positive relationship with adaptive coping strategies ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), highlighting its important role as a protective factor. Furthermore, comparative analysis showed that children with high levels of social support and self-esteem had significantly higher scores on adaptive coping scales compared to those with lower levels of these variables.

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Overall, the findings confirm that psychological factors play a crucial role in shaping coping strategies in children exposed to violence.

### Discussion

The findings of this study support and extend existing research on the psychological impact of violence on children. The positive relationship between anxiety and maladaptive coping strategies is consistent with previous studies, which suggest that heightened emotional distress limits children's ability to respond effectively to stress. The results also confirm the protective role of self-esteem in promoting adaptive coping strategies. Children with higher self-esteem tend to demonstrate greater confidence in dealing with challenges, which enables them to adopt more constructive and problem-focused coping approaches. This finding aligns with theoretical perspectives emphasizing self-esteem as a key internal resource for resilience. In addition, the strong association between perceived social support and adaptive coping highlights the importance of external resources in children's psychological adjustment. Support from family, peers, and teachers appears to buffer the negative effects of violence and encourages healthier coping behaviors.

One possible explanation for these findings is that both internal (self-esteem) and external (social support) resources enhance children's sense of security and control, which are essential for effective coping. Conversely, high anxiety may impair cognitive functioning and emotional regulation, leading to avoidance-based coping strategies. Compared to previous studies, this research provides a more comprehensive understanding by examining multiple psychological predictors simultaneously. It also emphasizes the importance of considering socio-cultural context when analyzing coping mechanisms in children exposed to violence.

The findings underscore the need for targeted psychological interventions aimed at reducing anxiety, strengthening self-esteem, and enhancing social support systems.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, this study examined the psychological predictors of coping strategies in children exposed to violence and identified key factors influencing their coping behavior. The results indicate that anxiety, self-esteem, and perceived social support significantly contribute to the development of adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. The study highlights the critical role of both internal and external resources in promoting resilience among vulnerable children. Enhancing self-esteem and strengthening social support networks can facilitate the use of adaptive coping strategies, while reducing anxiety may help prevent maladaptive responses. The practical significance of this research lies in its implications for psychological support programs. Schools, families, and mental health professionals should work collaboratively to create supportive environments that foster positive coping mechanisms in children exposed to violence. Future research may focus on longitudinal studies and intervention-based approaches to further explore the development of coping strategies over time.

Overall, the findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on child psychology and provide a foundation for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies.

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