Perceived Stress and Coping Skills among Higher Secondary School Students in Mizoram: A Correlational Study

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Abstract - **The present study investigates the level of perceived stress and coping skills among higher secondary school students in Mizoram and examines the relationship between the two variables. A total of 1,386 students were selected from 37 higher secondary schools across five districts of Mizoram. Data were collected using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) by Cohen Williamson (1988) and the researcher-developed Coping Skills Scale. Statistical analyses such as percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's correlation coefficient were applied. Results revealed that most students experienced moderate levels of both stress and coping skills. A significant negative correlation was found between perceived stress and coping skills, indicating that students with better coping skills tend to perceive less stress. These findings highlight the need for integrating coping skill development and emotional-resilience programs into the school curriculum.**

Keywords - **Perceived stress, coping skills, higher secondary students, Mizoram, correlation.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional period marked by emotional turbulence and developmental changes that influence learning and behavior. Santrock (2020) described this stage as a period of "storm and stress," during which young people struggle with identity formation, peer influence, and academic expectations. Stress, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), is "a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised as taxing or exceeding the person's resources." It is not the situation itself but the individual's perception that determines stress intensity.

In modern schooling, stress has become an unavoidable part of adolescent life. Academic workload, examinations, and parental expectations often create a pressure-filled environment (Misra & Castillo, 2004). In Mizoram, where education holds high social and cultural importance, higher secondary school students face additional pressures from family and community expectations. Success in board examinations and career selection is often seen as a collective achievement for families. Consequently, stress is not only an individual psychological state but also a social concern intertwined with communal aspirations.

Coping, as defined by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989), consists of "cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." Coping skills help students regulate emotions, problem-solve, and maintain psychological equilibrium. In the Mizo context, coping may involve social and spiritual dimensions such as support from peers, teachers, and church communities. Understanding how these coping skills function can help educators strengthen students' mental health through culturally responsive interventions.

This study therefore aims to identify the level of perceived stress and coping skills among higher secondary school students in Mizoram and to examine the relationship between these two constructs. The findings are expected to contribute to educational and psychological strategies that promote emotional well-being and resilience in adolescents.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A number of recent studies between have explored stress and coping among adolescents, revealing both consistent and contrasting results.

1. **Singh and Kaur (2017)** found that most adolescents in Punjab experienced moderate levels of academic stress, largely due to examination anxiety and competition. Their study suggested that structured relaxation programs can lower anxiety and improve focus.
2. **Kumar and Ghosh (2018)** observed that students using adaptive coping methods—such as time management and social support—reported significantly lower stress levels than those relying on avoidance.
3. **Sharma and Tripathi (2019)** demonstrated that emotional regulation and self-control are linked to reduced perceived stress, emphasizing that life-skills education enhances students' coping competence.
4. **Nandhini and Kumar (2020)** compared urban and rural students and concluded that while urban students faced more academic competition, they benefited from better access to coping resources.
5. **Patel and Singh (2022)** noted gender differences, with female students showing higher perceived stress but stronger emotional coping strategies, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive interventions.
6. **Gupta and Khanna (2021)** found that mindfulness-based programs improved students' coping abilities and reduced anxiety.
7. **Joshi and Verma (2023)** studied adolescents in Northeast India and revealed that family expectations and community involvement heavily influence students' stress experiences—an aspect that resonates with Mizoram's communal culture.
8. **Banerjee and Das (2024)** concluded that problem-focused coping correlates with higher resilience and academic satisfaction, suggesting that strengthening coping skills can substantially improve students' well-being.

Overall, the reviewed studies demonstrate that moderate stress is typical among adolescents, yet coping skills—particularly emotional regulation and social support—serve as vital buffers. However, differences in cultural, environmental, and educational contexts necessitate region-specific studies such as this one in Mizoram.

III. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Adolescence is often a turning point in life when young people face emotional changes and growing responsibilities. For students, this stage can bring pressure from studies, examinations, and expectations from family and society. In Mizoram, where education holds deep cultural and social value, students often carry not only their own ambitions but also the hopes of their families, which can sometimes lead to stress. How they manage this stress—their coping skills—greatly influences their emotional health and academic performance. Yet, very few studies have explored how students in Mizoram cope with such pressures within their unique cultural and community context. This study therefore seeks to examine the levels of perceived stress and coping skills among higher secondary students in Mizoram and how the two are related, with the aim of helping teachers, parents, and students themselves build stronger resilience and create more understanding, supportive learning environments.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To determine the level of perceived stress among higher secondary school students in Mizoram.
2. To determine the level of coping skills among higher secondary school students in Mizoram.
3. To examine the relationship between perceived stress and coping skills among higher secondary school students in Mizoram.

V. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H_0: There is no significant correlation between perceived stress and coping skills among higher secondary school students in Mizoram.

VI. METHODOLOGY

Method of Study

This study adopted a quantitative approach with a descriptive–correlational design, aiming to explore the levels of perceived stress and coping skills among higher secondary school students and to determine how these two variables are related.

Population and Sample Size

The population of the study consisted of all higher secondary school students enrolled in Classes XI and XII in Mizoram during the academic session 2024–2025. The study was delimited to five districts—Aizawl, Champhai, Lunglei, Serchhip, and Kolasib— to ensure adequate representation while maintaining feasibility.

A total of 1,386 students from 37 higher secondary schools were selected as the sample. The selected schools represented 27.20% of all higher secondary schools within the five districts, ensuring adequate statistical representation. Table 1 shows statistics of sampled schools by district.

Table 1

Statistics of Higher Secondary Schools and Sampled Schools by District

Sl. No.	Districts	No. of Schools	No. of Sampled Schools	Percentage of Sampled Schools (%)
1	Aizawl	73	20	27.40
2	Champhai	10	3	30.00
3	Kolasib	10	3	30.00
4	Lunglei	29	7	24.13
5	Serchhip	14	4	28.57
	Total	136	37	27.20 %

Sampling Technique

A multi-stage stratified random sampling technique was employed, as outlined below:

1. First Stage – District Selection: Five districts were chosen randomly taking into account accessibility and feasibility of data collection.
2. Second Stage – School Selection: Within each selected district, higher secondary schools were stratified by district size, and a proportionate number of schools were chosen randomly to maintain representativeness.
3. Third Stage – Student Selection: From each sampled school, students from Classes XI and XII were selected through simple random sampling, ensuring inclusion across gender and academic streams.

VII. TOOLS USED

1. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) by Cohen and Williamson (1988) was used to measure students' perception of stress.
2. Coping Skills Scale, developed by the researcher, was used to assess how effectively students manage stress and adjust to everyday challenges.

VIII. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

The data were analyzed using percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient.

IX. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This section presents the analysis of data collected from 1,386 higher secondary school students across five districts of Mizoram. Descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation were computed to determine the levels of perceived stress and coping skills. Pearson's product–moment correlation was then applied to examine the relationship between perceived stress and coping skills.

Objective 1: To find out the level of perceived stress among higher secondary school students in Mizoram.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS 10) was used with higher secondary school students in Mizoram to understand how they view and experience stress in their daily lives. Their responses were carefully scored following the standard procedure of the scale, and students were grouped into three categories: High Stress, Moderate Stress, and Low Stress, as per the established norms. The details of these stress levels are shown in Table 2 and Figure 1.

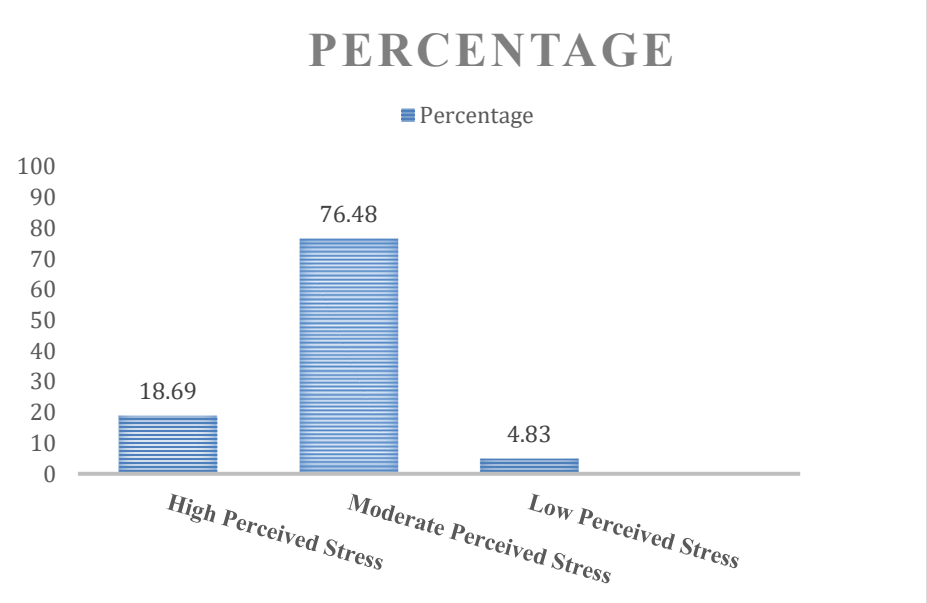
Table 2

Level of Perceived Stress among higher secondary school students in Mizoram

Category	Range of Scores	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
High Perceived Stress	27 and above	259	18.69
Moderate perceived Stressed	14 - 26	1060	76.48
Low Perceived Stressed	13 and below	67	4.83
Total		**1386**	**100**

Figure 1

Percentage showing the level of perceived stress among higher secondary school students in Mizoram



As shown in Table 2 and Figure 1, out of the total 1386 students, a large majority of 1,060 (76.48%) of higher secondary students experience a moderate level of perceived stress, while 259 students (18.69 %) experience high stress and only 67 students (4.83%) report low stress. This indicates that most adolescents in Mizoram are coping adequately with daily life pressures, yet a significant proportion still face high stress that may affect their emotional and academic functioning.

Objective 2: To find out the level of coping skills among higher secondary school students in Mizoram

The Coping Skills Scale developed by the researcher was administered to higher secondary school students in Mizoram to assess various aspects of coping such as academic, physical, spiritual and emotional control, and peer pressure. After collecting responses from the students, their scores were carefully evaluated. Based on their overall performance, the students were categorized into three groups—High Coping Skills, Moderate Coping Skills, and Low Coping Skills. The results of this assessment are shown in Table 3 and Figure 2.

Table 3

Level of coping skills among higher secondary school students in Mizoram

Category	Range of Scores	Number of Students	Percentage
High Coping Skills	109 and above	187	13.49
Moderate Coping Skills	79 - 108	1055	76.12
Low Coping Skills	78 and below	144	10.39
Total		**1386**	**100**

Figure 2

Percentage showing the level of coping skills among higher secondary school students in Mizoram

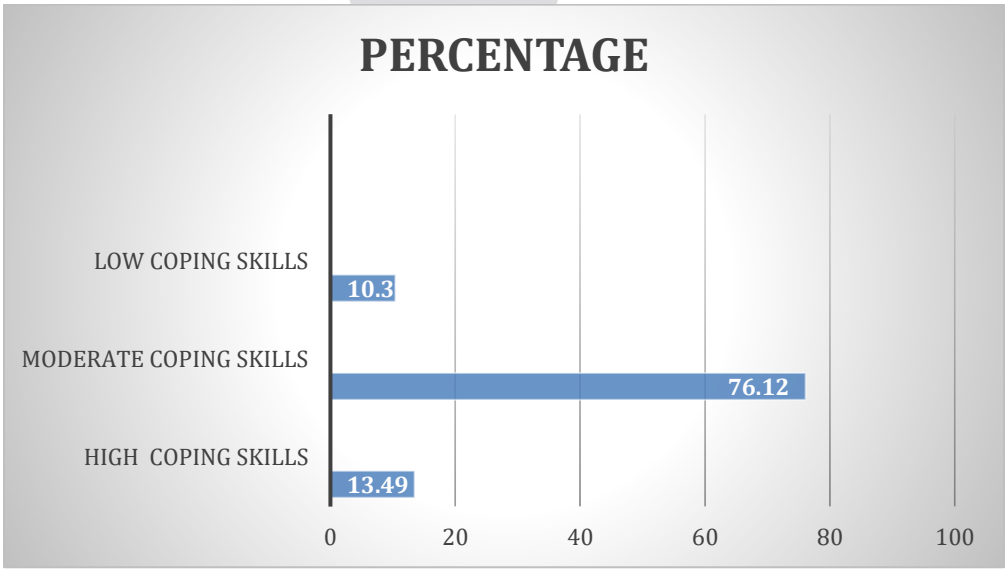


Table 3 and Figure 2 reveals that 1055 students (76.12%) out of the total students demonstrate moderate coping skills, 187 students (13.49 %) show high coping, and 144 students (10.39 %) display low coping skills. The findings suggest that most adolescents possess balanced adaptive skills, although some may require targeted support to strengthen their coping skills.

Objective 3: To examine the relationship between perceived stress and coping skills among higher secondary school students in Mizoram.

Null hypothesis: "There is no significant correlation between perceived stress and coping skills among higher secondary school students in Mizoram."

This section examines whether the way students manage stress is related to the level of stress they experience. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to examine the nature and strength of the relationships between the two variables. The correlation between perceived stress and coping skills is presented in Table 4, showing whether students with stronger coping skills experience lower levels of perceived stress.

Table 4

Correlation between perceived stress and Coping skills

		PERCEIVED STRESS	COPING SKILLS
PERCEIVED STRESS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.280*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	1386	1386
COPING SKILLS	Pearson Correlation	-.280*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	1386	1386

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level*

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = -0.280$, $p < 0.01$) showing a significant negative relationship between perceived stress and coping skills. This means students who possess stronger coping skills tend to experience lower levels of stress. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming the buffering role of coping skills in reducing the impact of stress among adolescents in Mizoram.

X. MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Major Finding 1: Most students experience a moderate level of perceived stress.

The analysis revealed that a large majority of higher secondary school students in Mizoram experience a moderate level of perceived stress, while a smaller proportion face high stress. This finding is consistent with the results of Singh and Kaur (2017), who also reported moderate stress among adolescents in Punjab due to examination pressure and competition. Similarly, Joshi and Verma (2023) found that adolescents in Northeast India experience moderate level of stress influenced by family expectations and community involvement – a trend that closely mirrors the Mizo context, where collective responsibility and academic achievement are culturally emphasized. However, this result contrasts slightly with Nandhini and Kumar (2020), who found higher stress among urban students due to intense competition. The difference may be attributed to Mizoram's relatively smaller, community-oriented educational environment where emotional and social support systems – both within families and through church networks – help buffer extreme stress levels despite academic pressure.

Major Finding 2: The majority of students demonstrate moderate coping skills.

The results showed that most students possess moderate coping abilities, with a small number demonstrating either high or low levels. This aligns closely with Kumar and Ghosh (2018), who observed that students using adaptive coping strategies, such as time management and social support, experience lower stress levels.

The finding also supports Sharma and Tripathi (2019), who highlighted that emotional regulation and self-control play key roles in reducing perceived stress, as well as Banerjee and Das (2024), who found that problem-focused coping enhances resilience and academic satisfaction.

Nevertheless, the present finding differs slightly from Gupta and Khanna (2021), who reported significant improvements in coping through mindfulness-based interventions. This contrast may stem from the fact that such structured mindfulness or psychological training programs are still relatively uncommon in Mizoram's school settings. Students here tend to rely more on natural or culturally rooted coping mechanisms, such as spiritual faith, peer support, and family encouragement, rather than formal stress-management programs.

Major Finding 3: A significant negative correlation exists between perceived stress and coping skills.

The study found a significant negative correlation between perceived stress and coping skills ($r = –0.280$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that students with stronger coping abilities tend to perceive less stress. This finding supports the theoretical perspective of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which posits that coping acts as a moderating factor in stress experiences. Empirically, it agrees with Kumar and Ghosh (2018) and Banerjee and Das (2024), both of whom reported that effective coping strategies lead to reduced levels of perceived stress.

However, this finding partly contrasts with Patel and Singh (2022), who observed gender differences in coping and stress levels, noting that female students reported higher stress despite having strong emotional coping strategies. The contrast may be due to cultural variations: in Mizoram, where social expectations are more uniform across genders and strong community ties prevail, gender-based differences in stress experiences are often less pronounced.

Overall, these findings reinforce that coping skills serve as a crucial buffer against stress among adolescents. The results align with prior research in showing that moderate stress is common and that adaptive coping mechanisms — both personal and social — are vital for maintaining students' mental well-being. At the same time, the study highlights the importance of strengthening structured life-skills and mindfulness-based programs within Mizoram's education system to enhance coping efficiency and reduce psychological strain.

XI. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study offer valuable insights for teachers, school administrators, parents, and policymakers concerned with students' emotional and psychological well-being.

1. Integration of life-skills education: Schools should incorporate life-skills and stress-management programs into the curriculum. These programs can help students recognize stress triggers and develop healthy ways of coping with academic and social challenges.
2. Teacher and counselor training: Teachers and school counselors play a vital role in supporting students. Providing professional training in stress identification, emotional guidance, and mental-health first aid can make classroom environments more supportive and responsive.
3. Parental involvement: Parents need to be made aware of how excessive academic pressure affects adolescents. Encouraging open communication at home and maintaining realistic expectations can foster a balanced and nurturing atmosphere.
4. Peer and community engagement: Mizoram's strong sense of community can be used positively by organizing peer mentoring programs, youth clubs, and church-based activities that promote resilience and a shared sense of belonging.
5. Policy-level initiatives: The Directorate of School Education could introduce school-wide wellness programs, regular psychological screening, and training sessions to strengthen students' coping capacities at the institutional level.

Overall, these educational implications highlight that student well-being should be viewed as an essential component of academic achievement rather than a separate concern.

XII. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

1. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to observe how perceived stress and coping patterns evolve across academic years.
2. Comparative studies between rural and urban schools in Mizoram may help identify contextual differences in stress sources and coping opportunities.
3. Researchers could use qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus-group discussions, to capture students' lived experiences and personal narratives about stress.
4. Future work may also include additional variables such as personality traits, social support,

and academic motivation to develop a more holistic understanding of adolescent well-being.

5. Experimental or intervention-based studies could assess the effectiveness of school-based life-skills and mindfulness programs in enhancing students' coping efficiency and reducing perceived stress.

These recommendations can help build a stronger evidence base for promoting emotional health among higher secondary students in Mizoram and beyond.

XIII. CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that most higher secondary school students in Mizoram experience a moderate level of perceived stress and demonstrate moderate coping skills, suggesting that while students generally manage stress effectively, there remains scope for improvement. The significant negative correlation between stress and coping confirms that students who possess stronger coping skills tend to experience lower levels of perceived stress.

These findings emphasize the importance of developing students' emotional resilience and adaptive skills as part of holistic education. In Mizoram's close-knit social environment—where family, school, and community values are deeply interwoven—students benefit from strong interpersonal and moral support. However, the absence of structured life-skills or counseling programs means that some students still struggle silently with stress, especially during critical academic transitions.

Therefore, schools and policymakers should focus not only on academic excellence but also on nurturing emotional well-being, self-regulation, and problem-solving abilities. Strengthening coping skills is not just a protective factor against stress—it is a foundation for developing confident, balanced, and responsible young citizens who can contribute meaningfully to society.

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