Coping with Work-Related Stress
What an Abridged Cybernetic Coping Scale Can Tell Us

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Introduction

- Working adults commonly report **interpersonal conflict** among coworkers, taxing **workloads**, and **organizational constraints** as sources of stress (Holton, Barry, & Chaney, 2016; Spector & Jex, 1998).
- Coping methods are self-regulatory efforts that influence perceived stress (Edwards & Baglioni, 1993).
- Different people cope differently depending on contextual circumstances (Kahn & Byosiere, 1990).
- The present study examines (a) equivalent functioning of the Cybernetic Coping Scale, (b) coping method usage, and (c) perceived coping effectiveness across stressor contexts.

Method

Participants

- 100 Mechanical Turk Participants (final N = 97)
- 52% Male; 77% White/Caucasian; Average age = 35 yrs (SD = 11)
- 84% Employed Full-Time; Average job tenure = 5 yrs (SD = 5)

Online Survey

- 3 Workplace Potential Stressors presented in random order
  - ✓ Organizational Constraints (Org)
  - ✓ Workload (Work)
  - ✓ Interpersonal Conflict (Int)
- Spector and Jex's (1998) frequency measures of each stressor
- Cybernetic Coping Scale (CCS; Edwards & Baglioni, 1993) targeted for each stressor (5-point Likert Scale)
- 7 items measuring perceived coping Effectiveness targeted for each stressor (5-point Likert Scale; α = .90)

Model Fit Indices for the Full versus Abridged Cybernetic Coping Scales

Model	Invariance Level	χ^2	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	$\Delta\chi^2$	p
Full 20-Item CCS	Configural	895.92	.10	.88	.86		
	Metric	934.11	.09	.88	.86	38.18	.15
	Scalar	980.77	.09	.87	.87	46.67	.03
Abridged 14-Item CCS	Configural	307.87	.07	.95	.94		
	Metric	324.81	.07	.95	.94	16.94	.53
	Scalar	345.39	.07	.95	.94	20.58	.30

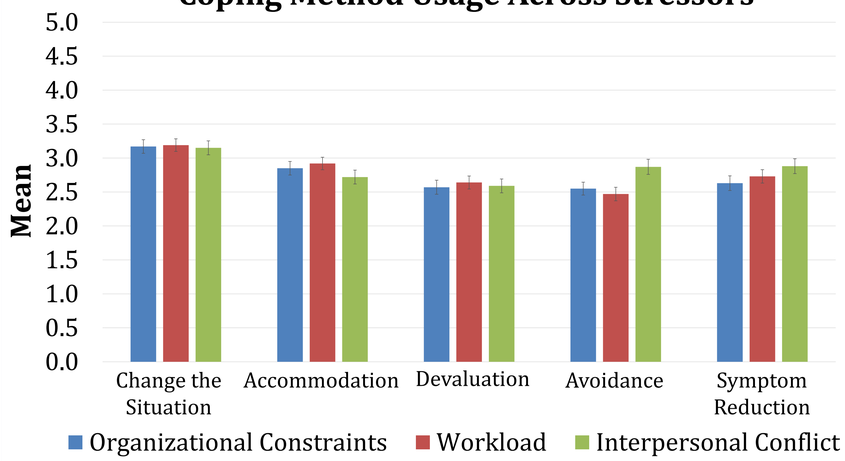
Results

Abridged Cybernetic Coping Subscales and Items

Change the Situation (α = .83)
1. I try to change the situation to get what I want.
2. I focus my efforts on changing the situation.
3. I work on changing the situation to get what I want.
Accommodation (α = .83)
4. I make an effort to change my expectations.
5. I try to convince myself that the way things are is, in fact, acceptable.
6. I try to adjust my own standards.
Devaluation (α = .89)
7. I tell myself the problem was not so serious after all.
8. I tell myself the problem is not such a big deal after all.
9. I try to convince myself that the problem is not very important after all.
Avoidance (α = .85)
10. I try to avoid thinking about the problem.
11. I try to keep my mind off the problem.
12. I try to turn my attention away from the problem.
Symptom Reduction (α = .78)
13. I try to just get it off my chest.
14. I try to let off steam.

- Participants reported differing degrees of exposure to the 3 stressors: Organizational Constraints (M = 2.11, SD = .77), Workload (M = 3.29, SD = 1.01), and Interpersonal Conflict (M = 1.63, SD = .60).
- **Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analyses (MCFA) with Invariance Testing** indicates the 14-item abridged CCS offers a better fit for the present data (lower RMSEA; higher CFI & TLI) than the full 20-item CCS.
- **Latent Mean Difference Testing** suggests similar usage of each coping method across all 3 stressors except for the Avoidance method ($\Delta\chi^2$ = 7.05, p = .029), which is used significantly more with Interpersonal Conflict stressors.
- Correlations between perceived coping Effectiveness and each coping method vary in magnitude across stressors. While **Multiple Linear Regression** indicates that together these coping methods significantly predict Effectiveness (Adj. R^2 = 26.2% [Org], 10.9% [Work], 8.5% [Int]), only the Change method offers unique prediction for each stressor (β = .382/.264/.280). Additionally, Avoidance uniquely predicts in the Workload stressor context (β = -.292).

Coping Method Usage Across Stressors



Correlations Between Coping Methods & Perceived Effectiveness Across Stressors

Coping Method	Stressor Context		
	Organizational Constraints	Workload	Interpersonal Conflict
Change the Situation	.49**	.31**	.33**
Accommodation	.40**	.18	.12
Devaluation	.26*	.13	.17
Avoidance	.01	-.13	-.04
Symptom Reduction	.08	.11	.12

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01

Discussion

- Researchers and practitioners should carefully examine the properties of the Cybernetic Coping Scale items.
- Workers choose to cope with different work-related stressors in similar ways.
- Choosing to cope in an effortful, problem-solving way (i.e., Changing the Situation) appears to have the greatest influence on workers' perceptions of their own effectiveness at handling stress.
- Workers who decide to cope with their stress by avoiding its source are more likely to do so if the source is related to Interpersonal Conflict rather than Workload or Constraints.