

# The Relation between Proactive Coping and Well-Being: An Example of Middle-Aged and Older Learners from Taiwan

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**Abstract**—The purpose of this research was to explore the relation between proactive coping and well-being of middle-aged adults. We conducted survey research that with t-test, one way ANOVA, Pearson correlation and stepwise multiple regression to analyze. This research drew on a sample of 395 participants from the senior learning centers of Taiwan. The results provided the following findings: 1. The participants from different residence areas associated significant difference with proactive coping, but not with well-being. 2. The participants' perceived of financial level associated significant difference with both proactive coping and well-being. 3. There was significant difference between participants' income and well-being. 4. The proactive coping was positively correlated with well-being. 5. From stepwise multiple regression analysis showed that two dimensions of proactive coping had positive predictability. Finally, these results of this study can be provided as references for designing older adult educational programs in Taiwan.

**Keywords**—Middle-age adults, learners, proactive coping, well-being.

## I. INTRODUCTION

TAIWAN has become ageing society since 1993. The ration of aging population will exceed 14% and become aged society in 2018. Furthermore, the ration of aging population will be over 20% and thus become super-aged society in 2025. The Ministry of the Interior organized a survey of the elderly status for people over the age of 55. According to the result of this investigation, the sequence of the aging issues that elderly were worried about was "health", "income", and "care of their own sickness" [1]. Aspinwall & Taylor proposed the concept of proactive coping, which can be viewed as a potential stress that people can pre-or early discover, and further prevent and mitigate the impact of potential threats [2]. Ouwehand, De Ridder & Bensing indicated that the most suitable groups for the proactive coping are people over the age over 45, because they are facing potential threats that accompany the aging process [3]. Ranzijn believed that proactive coping is also the important factor affecting the psychological well-being of the elderly [4]. Therefore, people over the age of 45 were the main target in this study, so that they would be prepared in advance

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to cope with the future problems, to improve their well-being and quality of their older life, and thus achieve their successful aging.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. The Theory of Proactive Coping

Aspinwall & Taylor proposed the concept of proactive coping. This concept advocated that people can identify potential sources of stress in advance then take pre-emptive actions [2]. Schwarzer & Taubert believed that proactive coping is a process of goal setting and implementation, as well as a personal inclination and ability of preparing for the challenges of the future life [5]. Greenglass proposed that proactive coping is a multi-faceted and future coping strategy [6]. If combined with future-oriented planning and target setting strategies, then the personal life goals management and the process of implementation will be able to integrate. In summary, proactive coping can help individuals to continue to pursue or achieve personal goals.

Bode, de Ridder and Bensing believed that proactive coping is an expectation for the future, and prevention the undesirable changes. Meanwhile, proactive coping is also the ability of self-adjustment to face the future of the elderly [7], [8].

Through personal investment in their future, proactive coping can help to promote successful aging, and to focus on personal growth, as well as to optimize the middle-aged and older age life. Ouwehand et al. indicated that proactive coping is one kind of future-oriented perspectives that can help individuals to set practical goals and to have planning ability [9]; on the other hand, proactive coping can also predict positive results and promote health and well-being [10].

In summary, proactive coping is a perspective of orientation, ability, behavior, and preventive measure. Individuals may be using proactive coping strategies to carry out prevention to mitigate the impact of potential treats, and can help individuals set and achieve goals, and thus to plan early for the future and take practical actions.

### B. The Theory of Well-being

Andrews & Withey believed that well-being is a personal subjective experience, and the three elements of well-being are positive emotion, negative emotion, and cognition to life satisfaction [11]. Veenhoven proposed that well-being includes dimensions of emotion and cognition [12], [13]. People can

detect their personal well-being status through the analysis of growth and decline of their positive and negative feeling. Ryff divided the meaning of well-being into six dimensions, includes self-acceptance, good interpersonal relationship, autonomy, environmental control, life goals, and personal development [14]. Lu believed that well-being is an integrated status that covering two major components: the assessment of individual life satisfaction as well as the overall assessment of the strength of positive and negative feelings [15].

The researches of the meaning of well-being included personal satisfaction of basic needs, self-realization and inner sense of belonging, harmony of interpersonal relationship, as well as wisdom and spiritual continues growing [16]; component of emotions or feelings (personal happiness and unhappiness), and the content of reaction and criticism (for life satisfaction) [17].

Overall, well-being is to describe the positive feelings of the individuals' whole life satisfaction, and may be affected by external environmental factors. This study had summarized the above connotations into six dimensions: physical health, psychological health, level of independence, social relationships, religious and surroundings. Furthermore, the six dimensions were used to measure the well-being status of the middle-aged and older participants in this study.

### III. METHOD

#### A. Participants

The participants of this study were 395 senior learners who participated in "Management and Leadership of Senior Learning Center" training program that organized by the Taiwan Ministry of Education in 2013.

#### B. Measures

The questionnaire was divided into three scale parts: proactive coping, well-being, and personal background variables. In proactive coping aspect, "Assessment of Preparing for Aging" was used. The assessment was compiled by the team of Chung Cheng University Elderly Education Research Center, and the overall scale reliability was  $\alpha=.89$ . In well-being aspect, Hills & Argyle [18] Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) was used and  $\alpha=.91$ . In personal background variables area, the participants' gender, age, education, perceived financial status, occupational categories, and income of pre-retirement or present jobs were included.

The statistical analysis of this study included descriptive statistical analysis, independent sample t-test, ANOVA, person correlation, and stepwise multiple regression analysis.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### A. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

In this study, the effective participants were 395, with 67.1% of female and 32.9% of male. In terms of residence, the majority of the participants were from "middle south district" (35.2%) and from "south district" (27.8%). The age of "44

years old" and "55-59: (20.3%) were in the majority, followed by "65-69 years old" (16.5%). The greatest educational backgrounds were "bachelor/college" (46.8%) and "senior high and vocational" (24.6%). In the aspect of perceived financial status, most of the participants expressed that their financial status were "Good" (74.7%), secondly was "Bad" (17.5%). In occupational categories, "representatives, business executives, etc. and other professionals" are the most (32.9%). In terms of income of pre-retirement or present jobs, resulting in "€ 481 ~€960" (40.8%) for the majority, followed by "€960 ~€1440" (19%). This result also indicated that most of the participants had good financial conditions with steady sources of income.

TABLE I  
 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS (N=395)

Variables		N(%)
Residence	North District	51(12.9)
	Central District	95(24.1)
	Middle South District	139(35.2)
	South District	110(27.8)
Sex	Male	130(32.9)
	Female	265(67.1)
Age	44 Years Old	80(20.3)
	45-49 Years Old	49(12.4)
	50-54 Years Old	61(15.4)
	55-59 Years Old	80(20.3)
	60-64 Years Old	60(15.2)
	65-69 Years Old	65(16.5)
Education	Elementary (Inclusive)	14(3.5)
	Junior High School	36(9.1)
	Senior High And Vocational	97(24.6)
	Bachelor/College	185(46.8)
	Graduate Or Institute (Or Above)	63(15.9)
Perceived Financial Status	Very Bad	13(3.3)
	Bad	69(17.5)
	Good	295(74.7)
	Very Good	18(4.6)
Occupational Categories	Unskilled And Manual Workers	31(7.8)
	Service Workers And Salespersons	56(14.2)
	Office Staff	77(19.5)
	Technicians And Associate Professionals	22(5.6)
	Representatives, Business Executives, Etc.	130(32.9)
	Other Professionals	79(20.0)
Income Of Pre-Retirement Or Present Jobs	Below € 481	71(18.0)
	€481 ~€960	161(40.8)
	€960 ~€1440	75(19.0)
	€1440~€1919	69(17.5)
	€1919 Above	19(4.8)

#### B. The Results of Personal Background Variables of Middle-Aged and Older Learners and the Variance Analysis of Proactive Coping

1. The results indicated that there were no significant differences of proactive coping among the participants with different gender, age, education, occupational categories, and income of pre-retirement or present jobs.
2. The participants from different residence areas associated significant differences with proactive coping. In post

comparison, the participants from north district associated higher proactive coping mean than the participants from the south district. Central district's mean was also higher than the south. South central district, again, the mean was higher than the south district.

- The participants' perceived of financial level associated significant differences with proactive coping. The post comparison indicated that the participants whose consciously financial situation was "Very good", their proactive coping would be significantly higher than other participants. This echoed the result of the research of Aspinwall [19] and Ouwehand et al. [20], [9]: People with higher incomes have higher proactive coping, and will use more proactive coping strategies in their daily lives to remedy their future problems related to aging.

TABLE II  
THE RESULTS OF PERSONAL BACKGROUND VARIABLES OF MIDDLE-AGED AND OLDER LEARNERS AND THE VARIANCE ANALYSIS OF PROACTIVE COPING

Personal Background Variables	Proactive Coping Significant	Post Hoc Comparisons
Sex	0.884	
Residence	0.000***	North District > South District Central District > South District Middle South District > South District
Age	0.156	
Education	0.205	
Perceived Financial Status	0.000***	Very Good > Good > Bad
Occupational Categories	0.200	
Income Of Pre-Retirement Or Present Jobs	0.079	

\*P<.05, \*\*P<.01, \*\*\*P<.001

### C. The Results of Personal Background Variables of Middle-Aged and Older Learners and the Variance Analysis of Well-Being

- The results indicated that there were no significant differences of well-being among the participants with different gender, residence, age, education, occupational categories.
- The participants' perceived of financial level associated significant differences with well-being. The post comparison indicated that the participants whose consciously financial situation was "Very good", their well-being would be significantly higher than other participants. This might be because the participants with better financial conditions were able to better manage their life, be more independent, and maintain a better quality of their life, hence a sense of stability would be built in their later years.
- The participants' monthly income of pre-retirement or present jobs correlated significant differences with well-being. The post comparison indicated that the participants' well-being were much higher than others if their monthly income of pre-retirement or present jobs

were "above 1919 Euros". This echoed the results of the research of Lewinson, Redner, & Seeley [21] and Zhong [22]: The older adults with higher manageable monthly income, which means that individuals have a stable income and livelihood security, as well as a better living arrangements and controlling, would have a higher degree of personal well-being.

TABLE III  
THE RESULTS OF PERSONAL BACKGROUND VARIABLES OF MIDDLE-AGED AND OLDER LEARNERS AND THE VARIANCE ANALYSIS OF WELL-BEING

Personal Background Variables	Well-Being Significant	Post Hoc Comparisons
Sex	0.172	
Residence	0.447	
Age	0.067	
Education	0.260	
Perceived Financial Status	0.000***	Very Good > Good > Bad > Very Bad
Occupational Categories	0.320	
Income Of Pre-Retirement Or Present Jobs	0.017*	€1919 Above > Below € 481 €1919 Above > € 481 ~€960 €1919 Above > €960 ~€1440 €1919 Above > €1440 ~€1919

\*P<.05, \*\*P<.01, \*\*\*P<.001

### D. Correlation between Proactive Coping and Well-Being

The dimensions of reflection and initiative coping were correlated with well-being positively and significantly. This indicated that the degree of each dimension or overall of individual's proactive coping, would affect the degree of the well-being of the individuals. This was consistency with the results of the research of Smedema, Catalano, & Ebener [23] & Kahana, Moore & Kahana [24]: Proactive coping will affect individual's psychological feelings. The more the individual's proactive coping, the better the well-being.

TABLE IV  
CORRELATION BETWEEN PROACTIVE COPING AND WELL-BEING

	Well-Being The Correlation Coefficient
Reflection Coping	0.562**
Initiative Coping	0.486**
Proactive Coping	0.607**

\*P<.05, \*\*P<.01

### E. Predicting Well-Being from Proactive Coping

"Reflection coping" and "Initiative coping" are two predictors of proactive coping. These two predictors had significant predictability for well-being. The multiple correlation coefficient of these two predictors and "well-being" were .562 and .486, the coefficient of determination was .372, and was significant (p=.000<.05). Furthermore, the two predictors of proactive coping could effectively explain the variance (37.2%) of "well-being". From the view of standardized regression coefficients, the value of  $\beta$  of the two predictor variables was positive in the regression model. This indicated that the influences for "well-being" were positive.

TABLE V  
PREDICTING WELL-BEING FROM PROACTIVE COPING

Input Variable Sequentially	Multiple Correlation Coefficient	The Coefficient Of Determination R-square	Increase (adjusted R-square)	F	B	Beta
Intercept					2.117	
1.Reflection Coping	.562	.316	.315	181.859***	.462	.426
2.Initiative Coping	.486	.372	.369	116.348***	.246	.273

\*P<.05, \*\*P<.01, \*\*\*P<.001

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### A. Conclusions

1. The participants' proactive coping was varied by different residences: The participants from different residence areas associated significant difference with proactive coping, but not with well-being. The highest average was in the North area and the lowest was in the South area.
2. The individuals' proactive coping and well-being would be higher than others if they were satisfied with their perceived of financial level. The participants' perceived of financial level associated significant difference with both proactive coping and well-being.
3. The higher the individual's monthly income of pre-retirement or present jobs, the better the individual's well-being. The participants' monthly income of pre-retirement or present jobs associated significant differences with well-being, but not in proactive coping.
4. The participants' perceived of financial level associated significant differences with both proactive coping and well-being: The individual's proactive coping were significantly different by different residences and perceived of financial level. In addition, the participants' perceived of financial level and monthly income of pre-retirement or present jobs were associated significant differences with well-being.
5. There was positive correlation between proactive coping and well-being: Proactive coping was positively correlated with well-being. Both reflection and initiative coping dimensions of each dimension of proactive coping had positive predictability of well-being. The level of the individual's proactive coping would predict the level of well-being.

### B. Suggestions

1. Advice to senior educational institutions: Finance and financial planning courses can be added to educational plan in order to assist middle-aged and older adults to plan and prepare for their older life.
2. Advice to middle-aged and older adults: Cumulative the ability of consideration and planning for future by learning or thinking regarding the future goal and life, thereby to improve the quality of life in older age.
3. Suggestions for future researches: Subsequent studies may explore more by adding other variables, such as attitude toward aging, state of health...etc; hence to understand other influential factors regarding proactive coping in Taiwanese elderly people.

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