

Development and Validation of an Instrument Measuring the Coping Strategies in Situations of Stress

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Abstract : Stress causes deleterious effects to the physical, psychological and organizational levels, which highlight the need to use effective coping strategies to deal with it. Several coping models exist, but they don't integrate the different strategies in a coherent way nor do they take into account the new research on the emotional coping and acceptance of the stressful situation. To fill these gaps, an integrative model incorporating the main coping strategies was developed. This model arises from the review of the scientific literature on coping and from a qualitative study carried out among workers with low or high levels of stress, as well as from an analysis of clinical cases. The model allows one to understand under what circumstances the strategies are effective or ineffective and to learn how one might use them more wisely. It includes Specific Strategies in controllable situations (the Modification of the Situation and the Resignation-Disempowerment), Specific Strategies in non-controllable situations (Acceptance and Stubborn Relentlessness) as well as so-called General Strategies (Wellbeing and Avoidance). This study is intended to undertake and present the process of development and validation of an instrument to measure coping strategies based on this model. An initial pool of items has been generated from the conceptual definitions and three expert judges have validated the content. Of these, 18 items have been selected for a short form questionnaire. A sample of 300 students and employees from a Quebec university was used for the validation of the questionnaire. Concerning the reliability of the instrument, the indices observed following the inter-rater agreement (Krippendorff's α) and the calculation of the coefficients for internal consistency (Cronbach's α) are satisfactory. To evaluate the construct validity, a confirmatory factor analysis using MPlus supports the existence of a model with six factors. The results of this analysis suggest also that this configuration is superior to other alternative models. The correlations show that the factors are only loosely related to each other. Overall, the analyses carried out suggest that the instrument has good psychometric qualities and demonstrates the relevance of further work to establish predictive validity and reconfirm its structure. This instrument will help researchers and clinicians better understand and assess coping strategies to cope with stress and thus prevent mental health issues.

Keywords : acceptance, coping strategies, stress, validation process

Conference Title : ICIOP 2018 : International Conference on Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Conference Location : Vienna, Austria

Conference Dates : June 14-15, 2018