

Coping in Context: A Multi-Methods Examination of Adolescent Coping Across Three Countries

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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Review Stage at time of this submission - The review has not yet started.

Conflicts of interest - None declared.

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Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 29 December 2025 and was last updated on 29 December 2025.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective The objective of Aim 1 is to examine whether adolescents’ lived perceptions and descriptions of coping strategies are consistent with how coping is theoretically conceptualized and methodologically operationalized in the existing research literature, with the goal of identifying areas of alignment, divergence, and conceptual gaps relevant to culturally diverse and under resourced settings.

Rationale The rationale for Aim 1 is that dominant theories and measurement tools used to assess adolescent coping are largely derived from Western and adult-centric frameworks and may not fully capture how adolescents in diverse, under-resourced contexts understand and enact coping in their daily lives. Examining adolescents’ own perceptions alongside existing theoretical and

methodological operationalizations is necessary to identify conceptual gaps, assess cultural and contextual relevance, and ensure that subsequent measurement and analytic approaches are grounded in lived experience rather than untested assumptions.

Condition being studied The health condition of interest is adolescent mental health, with a focus on psychological distress arising from exposure to adversity during a critical developmental period. Adolescence is marked by rapid emotional, cognitive, and social changes, and exposure to stressors such as poverty, violence, social exclusion, and limited access to mental health services can disrupt healthy development and increase risk for anxiety, depression, substance use, and related mental health problems. How adolescents cope with these stressors plays a central role in either mitigating or exacerbating mental health outcomes, making coping a key

mechanism for understanding risk and resilience among adolescents living in under-resourced and culturally diverse settings.

METHODS

Search strategy The literature review will include searches conducted in PubMed, PsycINFO, and SCOPUS using combinations of terms related to the population (adolescent, youth), the construct of interest (coping, coping strategies), and measurement and validation (coping scale, coping measure, psychometric properties, reliability, validity), with additional terms used to identify cross cultural adaptations and validation studies in diverse and under resourced settings.

Participant or population The review and qualitative component of Aim 1 will address adolescent participants aged 10 to 19 years who took part in focus group discussions conducted in Santiago, Chile; Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Yogyakarta, Indonesia as part of the parent NIMH funded study. These adolescents were recruited through schools and represent diverse gender, age, and socio cultural backgrounds within under resourced settings. The literature review will similarly focus on studies that include adolescent populations within this age range to ensure alignment between adolescents' lived perspectives and the coping measures and theoretical frameworks evaluated in the review.

Intervention Does not apply.

Comparator Does not apply.

Study designs to be included Qualitative and literature based multi methods study design.

Eligibility criteria Eligibility for Aim 1 includes adolescents aged 10 to 19 years who participated in focus group discussions as part of the parent NIMH funded study conducted in Santiago, Chile; Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Participants were required to be enrolled in participating schools, provide assent with parental or guardian consent as applicable, and be able to participate in focus group discussions conducted in the local language. For the literature review component, eligible studies include peer reviewed empirical articles published in English that report on validated coping measures for adolescents aged 10 to 19 and include information on theoretical frameworks and psychometric properties. Studies focusing on other age groups, non empirical

publications, or instruments without psychometric evaluation are excluded.

Information sources The intended information sources for Aim 1 include electronic database searches conducted in PubMed, PsycINFO, and SCOPUS to identify peer reviewed studies on validated adolescent coping measures. Reference lists of included articles will be hand searched to identify additional relevant studies.

Main outcome(s) The outcomes of the review will include a comprehensive synthesis of validated coping instruments used with adolescents aged 10 to 19, detailing each instrument's theoretical framework, conceptualization of coping, item content, subscale structure, and reported psychometric properties, including reliability and validity. Additional outcomes will include documentation of the contexts and populations in which each measure has been applied, with particular attention to cross cultural adaptations and use in under resourced or low and middle income settings. As this is a methodological and conceptual review rather than an intervention study, no timing of outcome assessment or effect size measures will be evaluated; instead, outcomes will be descriptive and comparative in nature and will be summarized using structured extraction tables and a synthesis matrix to facilitate comparison with qualitative themes derived from the focus group data.

Additional outcome(s) Does not apply.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis The quality of primary studies included in the review will be assessed by systematically evaluating reported psychometric properties and methodological rigor of each coping measure. This assessment will include examination of reliability indicators such as internal consistency and test-retest reliability, validity evidence including construct, convergent, and discriminant validity, and clarity of the underlying theoretical framework guiding measure development. Additional considerations will include sample characteristics, age appropriateness, cultural adaptation procedures, and transparency of analytic methods. Quality appraisal will be used to contextualize findings and interpret the strength and applicability of each instrument rather than to exclude studies, given the review's focus on conceptual and methodological comparison rather than effectiveness.

Strategy of data synthesis Data analysis and synthesis for Aim 1 will proceed in parallel across

the qualitative and literature review components and will be integrated at the interpretation stage. Qualitative data from focus group discussions will be analyzed using inductive thematic analysis to identify patterns in adolescents' descriptions and meanings of coping strategies. In parallel, data from the literature review will be extracted and summarized using structured tables capturing theoretical frameworks, coping domains, and psychometric characteristics of validated adolescent coping measures. Findings from both components will then be synthesized using a comparison matrix to systematically examine areas of convergence, divergence, and gaps between adolescent defined coping strategies and existing theoretical and methodological operationalizations, with synthesis focused on conceptual alignment rather than quantitative pooling of results.

Subgroup analysis Does not apply.

Sensitivity analysis No formal sensitivity analyses will be conducted, as Aim 1 is qualitative and descriptive in nature and does not involve statistical estimation or effect size pooling. Rigor will instead be supported through analytic strategies such as iterative coding, constant comparison, reflexive memoing, and careful documentation of analytic decisions, as well as transparency in literature inclusion criteria and synthesis procedures. Sensitivity to context will be addressed by examining whether identified themes and areas of alignment or divergence vary by country, age group, or gender in the qualitative data and by noting contextual differences in how coping measures have been applied and adapted across settings in the literature.

Language restriction English.

Country(ies) involved US, Chile, Indonesia, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Keywords youth coping, global mental health, coping.

Dissemination plans Findings from Aim 1 will be disseminated through publication in peer reviewed academic journals focused on adolescent mental health, global mental health, and psychological measurement. In addition, results will be shared with all country partners involved in the parent study in Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Indonesia through meetings and written summaries to ensure findings are accessible and useful to local research teams. This two pronged dissemination approach will support

both scientific contribution and equitable knowledge sharing with international collaborators.

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