

Group Differences in Attendance and Academic Coping Strategies in High School Students

Evan Hanson

Bridgewater State University

**2. Research Question:** Does attendance effect a way a student copes when dealing with stress at school?

### 3. Hypotheses

Alternative Hypothesis: The more a student is absent from school, the less able they will be to cope with the stress they experience at school.

$$H_1: M_{\text{low}} \neq M_{\text{medium}}$$

$$M_{\text{low}} \neq M_{\text{high}}$$

$$M_{\text{medium}} \neq M_{\text{high}}$$

Null Hypothesis: There will be no effect found between coping strategies and attendance.

$$H_0: M_{\text{absence}} = M_{\text{coping}}$$

### 4. Project Abstract

#### Summary

Absences are shown to having lasting effects on students scores on student achievement. Also, the type of coping strategies used by a student are shown to impact a student's achievement. For the purpose of this study, two types of coping will be used. Emotion focused coping is when the student copes by trying to reduce the negative emotions felt that occur due to the environment. Problem focused coping aims to resolve or turn around the emotions being felt due to the environment. The thinking behind the researchers is that if students are able to stay in school more, they are able to form more effective problem focused coping strategies when faced with failure inside the school. Therefore, the two will be compared to see if a relationship existed, where less absences predicted more problem focused coping strategies used. A survey will be given out to 800 participants in 9<sup>th</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade in a northeastern school by Evan Hanson and Frodo Baggins. Before the survey is given, a consent form was given to the students to sign themselves, if they were over the age of 18, or have their parents sign. Once the data is collected, a debriefing letter will be sent out. A One Way ANOVA will be used to find significance within the data.

## Literature Review

Attendance is an important part of a student's school history. Attendance is also one that was researched in the past and is continuously looked at through many points in time. According to Epstein and Shelton (2002), solving the problem to absences continues to be the goal of many schools. However, in order for researchers to solve the challenge of absences, the researchers must figure out why they are missing school. Epstein and Shelton (2002) described chaotic classrooms, boring lessons, and teachers that do not listen, are all factors that go into student absences. Morrissey, Hutchinson, and Winsler (2014) include in their article that when financial resources are scarce, students face many challenges that increase the rate of being absent. Clearly, students face many challenges that must be overcome in order to get to school. However, each day the students are absent, then comes a cost for the self they created in schools.

When a student starts to become absent more frequently, many in school consequences start to fall on them. Roby's (2003) study looked at absences and student achievement and found a strong correlation in multiple grades. The strongest correlation was found at the ninth grade level, which was most likely due to the acquisition in the new school and new freedom. By missing these hours, it will be harder to acclimate to the new school climate. A correlation between grades in absentees was also found in elementary school students. Specifically, Morrissey, Hutchinson, and Winsler (2014) found that when the amount of days absent increased, lower test scores and grades resulted and as the students raised grades, the absences went down. The parents started to realize the importance of their child being in school and its effects on the grades. Therefore, if absences started to matter more as the students transitioned through grades, then absences in high school must have a significant impact on the student. In

relevance to the study, the importance of school attendance is evident. However, school attendance must affect more than just achievement.

Coping is used in a variety of settings for different kinds of stressors that appear in a child's life. Coping in these settings can be sorted into two broad categories. The first category is emotion-focused coping strategies. The second is problem-focused coping strategies. Everyone has a different definition and own twist on them but Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) provide a clear and concise definition of what these two categories of coping meant in their study assessing coping strategies. They defined problem-focused coping as actively doing something to alter the stress, for example; problem solving, information seeking, and problem focused support. They then defined emotion-focused coping as reducing or managing the emotional distress that is associated with the stressors. Examples of these include emotional expression, support seeking, denial, and wishful thinking. Furthermore, Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) address how certain types of coping can be adaptive and maladaptive. In their case, emotion-focused strategies tend to be more maladaptive than problem-focused strategies. They find that using emotional support in terms of venting or pushing away one's problems can be more maladaptive than adaptive. However, there are sometimes when emotion-focused strategies can be adaptive, e.g., when people are receiving emotional support when they feel insecure. Once they feel secure, they are then able to use a problem-focused strategy to conquer the stressor that they originally could not face. Notably, Compas, Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, and Wadsworth (2001) suggested that coping should not be split into emotion and problem-focused strategies, and instead it should be multidimensional. Multidimensional coping strategies embrace the concept that younger people are more diverse and unpredictable in their thinking. Hence, in this research, the younger population was looked at to see how they coped with stressors in a school setting.

Also, the coping variables in the current research were split into positive and defensive coping instead of emotion and problem-focused.

Students who are faced with an achievement dilemma is just one of the many situations in which students may use coping strategies, in fact, Bdrar, Rijavec, and Loncaric (2006) findings reveal the achievement of a student is negatively related to emotion focused coping strategies. In this same study, achievement was found to be positively related to problem focused coping strategies. Similarly, Hess and Copeland found that family interaction was negatively related to dropping out of high school. Interestingly enough, Family was the only significant factor out of that study to show significance with dropout rate. Students who go to their families for trouble often times get help and advice on how to fix the problem they are faced with, turning this into a problem focused coping strategy. In relevance to the current study, it provides an impactful and important skill that students might not learn due to their absences from school.

In summary, there is a good amount of research that looks at the effects of attendance on a student's achievement. Also, there is a good amount of evidence that looks at coping and the effects it possesses on students. However, there is little to no evidence that looks at the effects of attendance of a student coping strategy when it comes to stress in schools. This study will provide more insight on both absences and the different styles of coping. Therefore, the research question is as follows: Does a student's attendance rate effect the way they cope with stressors in an academic environment? The researchers hypothesized that the better attendance rate a student had, the more positive coping strategies would be seen.

**Data Collection Procedure**

The administrators of the school will be contacted in order to get permission to conduct the study in the school. With their permission, an email will be sent to all the students informing them of the study and asking for their participation. Students who elected to participate in the study will be given a consent form in their homeroom. The students will then bring home the consent form to their parents to get it signed. If they are over 18 years old, they will be able to sign it themselves. Once that consent form is returned, there will be a link sent to the participants for a survey created on [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). The students will be given a month to complete the survey which will allow for maximum participation. Once the survey is closed, the participants will be categorized into three groups. The low absent rate will consist of students who have missed between 0 and 5 days of school. The moderate absent group will consist of participants who missed 6 to 10 days of school. Finally, the high absentee group will consist of students who have missed 11 days or more. This information will be attained through a question in the survey asking: “How many days have you been absent this year”

The survey will consist of 4 demographic questions and 24 coping questions. These 28 questions will be uploaded to a site called SurveyMonkey. The survey will be administered to the students to collect the data on information surrounding their absences as well as their coping strategies they might use in a regular day at school. An example of a coping question is “I make a plan of action when encountering a situation at school.” Demographics questions are included in this set of questions. The answers to these questions will then be stored on the SurveyMonkey website and are protected by the website. The researchers will not be asking for names in the survey, which allows the students to submit anonymously.

**Personnel**

The research team consists of two researchers, Evan Hanson and Frodo Baggins. Evan Hanson possesses his school counseling license PreK- 8. Frodo Baggins possesses a mental health counseling license. The research participants will not be interacting with any of the researchers. The consent forms will be submitted to the student's home room teachers and the survey will be done through a common website. The researchers analyzing the survey data have experience with survey monkey and have above adequate knowledge with SPSS, the program being used for analysis. Both researchers have extensive knowledge in coping strategies in school aged individuals.

**Risks**

There will be minimal risks associated with this study. With the use of an online survey, IP addresses are at risk of being found.

**Benefits to Participants**

Participants will receive no rewards or benefits for completing the study.

**Benefits to society**

If the researcher's data back up the current studies hypothesis, then the study will provide need for further research in attendance. By researching attendance further, researchers could find ways to lower the drop-out rate. Students would then increase their learning time as well as increase their coping skills to deal with stressors inside of the school. In that sense, when students encounter a major failure, the students will be able to learn from that experience and reverse the failure in the future.

**Procedures**

Students who elect to participate in the study will be given a consent form in their homeroom. Once that consent form is returned, there will be a link sent to a survey created on surveymonkey.com. The students will be given a month to complete this survey to allow for the most amount of participation. Once the survey is closed, the participants will be categorized into three groups. The low absent rate will consist of students who have missed between 0 and 5 days of school. The moderate absent group will consist of participants who missed 6 to 10 days of school. Finally, the high absentee group will consist of students who have missed 11 days or more. This information will be attained through a question in the survey asking: "How many days have you been absent this year." After the information is collected, a debriefing letter will be sent out.

**Study Timeline**

The email asking for the student's participation will go out on February 1<sup>st</sup>. On February 15, consent forms will be given out to the students who have elected to participate in the study. The survey will go out at 12:00 AM on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 and will be open until 11:59 PM on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. A couple days after the survey closes, the debriefing letter will come out. Another 2 weeks will be taken to analyze the data. Once the data is analyzed, the report will be written and be available in the summer of 2020.

**Funding Status**

The research will be funded by Evan Hanson and will be costing approximately 5,000 dollars. This covers the cost of the researchers as well as the cost of the SPSS program that is being used to analyze the data.



**Participants**

A local high school in the northeast region will be contacted for this study. After talks with the school districts administration, a survey will be sent out to the student's email, asking for participation in this study. Students who were interested will send back their email. After allowing 1 week for students to respond back, there will be ideally 200 students from each grade of the high school (9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>), making a total of 800 participants that will volunteer to partake in the current study. This was 75% of the school. Once the names of the students are obtained, consent forms will be sent to them all. No private records will be accessed.

**Confidentiality**

In the survey, no personable identifiable information will be asked of the students. Each survey will be assigned a number between 1 and 800 to take place of the student's names. These numbers will represent each participant. The only identifiable information that will be obtained is the email address that will be asked from the student. The emails of these students will be kept for the researchers use only. The data will be stored for two years and then will be permanently deleted off of the computer.

**Compensation**

There will be no compensation for the study.

**Consent Process**

The consent will be dropped off at the school and given to the home room teachers to give out. Once signed by parents and/or student, the student will hand it in to the homeroom teacher. The researchers will then come by after school once a week to collect all the consent forms. A link to

the survey will not be sent unless the consent form is collected. The individuals who are below the age of 18 will need to bring the consent form home to get it signed by a parent or legal guardian. Those who are above the age of 18 will be able to give consent themselves.

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## Reference

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## Appendix 1

Letter to Administrators

Hello there!

I would like to ask your permission to allow me to conduct a survey among the students in your school from 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Your school is the only school I am recruiting for this study. Attached herewith is the survey questionnaire for this study.

The survey would last only about 3-4 minutes and would be done through the website called Survey Monkey. Participation in the survey is entirely voluntary. All information provided will be kept in utmost confidentiality and would be used only for academic purposes. The names of the respondents and the name of your school will not appear in any thesis or publications resulting from this study.

After the data have been analyzed, you will receive a copy of the executive summary. If you would be interested in greater detail, an electronic copy (e.g. PDF) of the entire article can be made available to you.

If you agree, kindly sign below acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this study/survey at your school and return the signed form on an enclosed envelope.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your interest and assistance with this research.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely  
Evan Hanson and Frodo Baggins



## APPENDIX 2

Initial email

Hello,

My name is Evan Hanson and I am conducting a study with Frodo Baggins looking at attendance and coping strategies used by students. We are trying to see if attendance effects the types of coping strategies students use when faced with a failure in school. We have constructed a survey and in need of participants to take it. That is where YOU come in! If you would be interested in helping us out and taking a quick survey, then please respond to this email. Then, you will receive a consent form to fill out. If you are below the age of 18, we will need your parent(s)/ guardian(s) to fill the form out for you. Once you return the form, the survey will be sent to you. If you are not interested, then please just disregard this email. Thank you.

Sincerely

Evan Hanson and Frodo Baggins

## APENDIX 3

Bridgewater State University Parental Consent Form

## Effects of Attendance of Students Coping Skills in School

By Evan Hanson and Frodo Baggins

You are being asked permission for your child to participate in research. For you to be able to make an informed decision about whether you want your child to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your child's personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your child's participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done to find out if a student's ability attends school improves their ability to cope with stressors they may face inside. This could be social problems, bad grades, or even minor conflicts with teachers. Your child's participation in this study will last for about a month and consists of just one survey. After your child takes the survey, the data will be taken and analyzed. Your child's name will not be used in this analysis.

Risks and Discomforts

There will be minimal risks associated with this study. With the use of an online survey, IP addresses are at risk of being found.

Benefits

This study is important to society because of the importance of attendance. If this study is able to prove that children are able to cope better when having less absences, then the importance of staying in school is reinforced. It might also bring in new research to find effective ways to keep students in school.

Confidentiality and Records

Your child's study information will be kept confidential by Evan Hanson.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your child's study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

- \* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
- \* Representatives of Bridgewater State University, including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at BSU;

Compensation

No compensation will be provided

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Evan Hanson at e3hanson@student.bridew.edu

If you have any questions regarding your child's rights as a research participant, please contact The Institutional Review Board, Bridgewater State University, (508) 531-XXXX.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks to your child and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Bridgewater State University has no funds set aside for any injuries your child might receive as a result of participating in this study
- you are 18 years of age or older
- your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary
- your child may leave the study at any time. If your child decides to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to your child and he/she will not lose any benefits to which he/she is otherwise entitled.

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

## APENDIX 4

Bridgewater State University Informed Consent Document

## Effects of Attendance of Students Coping Skills in School

By Evan Hanson and Frodo Baggins

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Bridgewater State University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask him/her any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have. If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

This study is being done to find out if a student's ability attends school improves their ability to cope with stressors they may face inside. This could be social problems, bad grades, or even minor conflicts with teachers. Your child's participation in this study will last for about a month and consists of just one survey. After your child takes the survey, the data will be taken and analyzed. Your child's name will not be used in this analysis.

Discomfort and Risks

There will be minimal risks associated with this study. With the use of an online survey, IP addresses are at risk of being found.

Benefits

This study is important to society because of the importance of attendance. If this study is able to prove that children are able to cope better when having less absences, then the importance of staying in school is reinforced. It might also bring in new research to find effective ways to keep students in school.

Your study information will be kept confidential by Evan Hanson.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your child's study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

- \* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
- \* Representatives of Bridgewater State University, including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at BSU;



Compensation

No compensation will be provided

Refusal/Withdrawal:

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

By signing below, I am indicating that I understand that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and I believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Any questions regarding the conduct of the project, questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or research related to injury, should be brought to the attention of the IRB Administrator at (508) 531-1242.

Any questions about the conduct of this research project should be brought to the attention of the principal investigator: Evan Hanson [e3hanson@student.bridgew.edu](mailto:e3hanson@student.bridgew.edu)

## APENDIX 5

Survey QuestionsDemographic Questions **Circle One**

What Grade are you in? 9 10 11 12

Race/Ethnicity African American, White/Caucasian, Hispanic, Portuguese, Other

Primary language: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Other

Please write in how many days of school you have missed this year? 0-5 6-10 11+

Directions

For this survey, the participants will read through each question about situations and experiences in school and answer it with a number between 1 and 5. 1 being never and 5 being always. The numbers are listed below for the participants to reference as they answer each question.

Coping Questions

Likert Scale

1= Never

2= Rarely

3= Sometimes

4= Very Often

5= Always

1. I try to grow as a person as a result of different situation encountered in school \_\_\_\_
2. I try to see a bad experience in school in a different light, to make it seem more positive \_\_\_\_
3. I look for something good in what is happening in a bad experience at school \_\_\_\_
4. I learn something from the school experiences I was in \_\_\_\_
5. I concentrate my efforts on doing something about situations I experience in school \_\_\_\_
6. I take additional action to try to get rid of the problem at school \_\_\_\_
7. I take direct action to get around the problem in school \_\_\_\_
8. I do what has to be done, one step at a time at school \_\_\_\_
9. I make a plan of action when encountering a situation at school \_\_\_\_
10. I try to come up with a strategy about what to do in situations at school \_\_\_\_
11. I think about how I might best handle the problem at school \_\_\_\_
12. I think hard about what steps to take when handling a problem at school \_\_\_\_
13. I discuss my feelings with someone at school \_\_\_\_
14. I try to get emotional support from friends at school \_\_\_\_
15. I get sympathy and understanding from someone at school \_\_\_\_
16. I talk to someone about how I feel while at school \_\_\_\_

17. I get upset and let my emotions out at school \_\_\_\_
18. I get upset and am really aware of it at school \_\_\_\_
19. I let my feelings out at school \_\_\_\_
20. I feel a lot of emotional distress and I find myself expressing those feelings a lot at school \_\_\_\_
21. I admit to myself that I can't deal with it, and quit trying at school \_\_\_\_
22. I just give up trying to reach my goal at school \_\_\_\_
23. I give up the attempt to get what I want at school \_\_\_\_
24. I reduce the amount of effort I'm putting into solving the problem at school \_\_\_\_

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## Appendix 6

Debrief

Hello!

Thank you for participating in this study. Your input for the questions is greatly appreciated. The next step in this study is to take all of these answers and run an analysis on them to see if attendance and coping strategies is related. If you wish to learn about the results of the study, please email [e3hanson@student.bridgew.edu](mailto:e3hanson@student.bridgew.edu) to be put on an email list. You can expect the results to be available in the month of April. Thank you once again for participating in this study. You have helped the researchers out greatly. Good luck with the rest of the school year!

Sincerely

Evan Hanson and Frodo Baggins