

# The Relationships between Social Problem Solving Skills and Student Engagement and Mental Health

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**Research Purpose:** This project considers the influence of social problem solving skills on student engagement and mental health. It is envisaged that students' superior perceived adaptive problem solving skills, would be associated with better academic adjustment (i.e. student engagement and GPA) and fewer endorsement of mental health symptoms.

**Research Description:** *Key variables*  
Perceived problem solving ability  
Student engagement  
Stress  
Strain  
Coping  
Depression  
Anxiety  
Stress

This project will be developed as an on-line survey on the Department of psychology Website. This project would look at the re-validation of the Student, Stress, Strain, and Coping Scale (Fogarty, 1997), and the student engagement scale (Beccaria, Lee, & Machin, 2008). The relationships between these scales and the Problem Solving Inventory (Heppner, 1988) will be evaluated in this project.

*Particular theories that the student would expect to draw upon or theories that have been used to develop the proposed project*

- Problem Solving theory
- Problem and Emotion focused coping
- Positive and negative affect
- Organisational / Occupational Health and Stress
- Student Engagement

*(d) Past research, especially if this is a replication project*  
Lee, E. Z. H. (2008). *Social Problem Solving and Mental Health: Do university studies have an impact?* University of Southern Queensland: Unpublished Honours Thesis.

This is a similar project to the above thesis in methodology however, some of the measures used in this proposed project will be slightly different e.g. the student stress strain and coping scale will be used as a mental health measure.

**Participants:** *(a) Approximately how many participants will be needed*  
200  
*(b) Where will they come from*  
USQ Student Pool  
*(c) The role that the student will play in recruitment*  
Student will assist with designing the on-line-survey page so it is placed on the web. Student will also in the first instance field any

participant questions and give an answer in consultation with the supervisor.

**Methodology:**

*Questionnaires that will be used*

Problem Solving Inventory  
Student Engagement Questionnaire  
Study and Well Being  
Positive and Negative Affect Schedule  
DASS-21  
Student Stress Strain and Coping Scale

*Data collection information (i.e., where data collection will occur)*

On-line Surveys

*(d) The role that the student will play in data collection*

Monitor only, all data will be collect via on-line-survey. Student will then analyse data sometime in June

*(e) If data collection is going to be shared with another project*

No however, two students could conduct this project

2. It is expected that this project may turn into a longitudinal study.

**Data Analysis:**

*(a) Broad type of analysis (i.e., quantitative/qualitative)*

Reliability  
Factor Analysis  
Regression

*(b) The level of analytical independence that you expect from the student*

Medium

*(c) Brief overview of statistical/data tasks that the student will be expected to perform (e.g., data screening, checking psychometric properties of questionnaires, separating participants into particular groups based on questionnaire responses, etc)*

Screening (i.e. Univariate and Multivariate outliers), reliability of questionnaires, separating participants into groups and performing analyses. Factor analysis of the Student stress, strain and coping scale may also be useful if there are enough respondents.

**Student friendliness:**

*(a) Whether project is suitable for external/on campus students.*

Both oncampus and external

*(b) If the student needs to travel for data collection, make this clear in this section.*

No

*(c) Supervision expectations (e.g., weekly, fortnightly, face-to-face, etc)*

Monthly – face to face or phone E-mail in between sessions will be strongly encouraged

**Further reading:**

Baker, S. R. (2003). A prospective longitudinal investigation of social problem-solving appraisals on adjustment to university,

stress, health, and academic motivation and performance. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35(3), 569-591.

Heppner, P. P., & Petersen, C. H. (1982). The development and implications of a personal problem-solving inventory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 29(1), 66-75.

**Expected research outcomes:** APS Conference Presentation 2010  
Entry level Journal article

**Ethics:**

- Ethical approval will be sought by supervisor; or
  - Ethics approved – number
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**Resources:**

- Project able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit
  - Project not able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit – additional funds will come from:
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Directory: \\Kappa\psych\Resources\Honours\2009  
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Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dotm  
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