

A Study on Personality Traits of College Going Students in Manipur with Special Reference to Gender and Coping Style as the Variable

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ABSTRACT

Personality of an individual is often attributed to the type of coping style used. The way in which an individual perceives stress and cope accordingly plays a role in it. Similarly, students differ in the way stressors are handled and the type of coping style used. Often, the transition from school to college environment brings in a new change. The changes in the form of adaptation to a new environment, number of new choices and experiences, peer group, financial constraint and so on. College students handle stress by using various coping styles which could be healthy or unhealthy ways of coping which could have an impact on their academic performance, dealing with problems and their mental health in general. In this paper it attempts to study the personality traits of college students in Manipur and if these traits have a relationship with the coping styles and gender. The research design used for this study was correlation design. The data was collected using random sampling technique. The sample comprised of 120 college students aged between 18-24 years. The tools administered for the study were NEO- Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) (Form S) (McCrae & Costa, 1988) and Coping Response Inventory (CRI) Adult form (Moos, 1992). The data was analysed using the SPSS 17, descriptive statistics and t-test. The findings from the study showed that there was significant relationship between Neuroticism and Avoidance coping style; Agreeableness was related to Avoidance coping style whereas, Extroversion, Openness, Conscientiousness was related to Approach coping style. In this present study, no gender differences were found on personality traits and coping styles of the college students.

Keywords: *Personality, Coping, Gender, College students*

Personality of an individual is what makes people partly same or different from one another. Individual differences in the patterns of actions, thoughts and feelings. To paraphrase Allport, (1961) personality is the dynamic organisation within the person of the psychophysical systems that determine the unique adjustments to one's environment. This further explains that each person's personality determines the way we behave. The influences of personality on coping style have been found in many ways in which some

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occur prior to coping. As mentioned, even prior to coping, personality influences other factors such as the frequency of exposure to stress, the type of stressors faced and appraisals (Vollrath, 2001). Coping is the way in which a person constantly changes their thinking and behaviour to manage external or internal demands that are taxing and exceeds the person's resources. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The personality differences which distinguish from one another are broadly categorised into the five traits which are neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Neuroticism was predicted to have coping responses as low (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995) whereas, extroversion, conscientiousness, and openness was related to positive coping resources (Penley & Tomaka 2002, Vollrath 2001). Emotion focused coping style is found to have a positive association with neuroticism. It was also shown that those students that used problem coping strategies achieved better academically than students that employed emotional coping strategies. (Saduu, Usman & Tunde, 2013). The personality trait neuroticism predicted problematic strategies like wishful thinking, withdrawal, and emotion-focused coping but, like Extraversion, also predicted support seeking. (Connor, Jennifer, Flachsbart & Celeste, 2007). Studies have been conducted to have a clearer understanding about the individual differences and how young people cope with the situation and environment. The personality traits on Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness occurred to be related with rational and active coping, neuroticism on the other hand was related to passive and emotional coping. However, Agreeableness was not found to be related to any of the coping style. (Francoise, Contreras, Juan & Gustavo, 2009). Boye and French (2009) also further agreed that neuroticism was related to avoidance coping style in the study conducted among college students.

Gender difference on some traits and coping style was found wherein Openness was positively correlated with problem- focused coping styles in female students. Personality trait on agreeableness had positive correlation with problem-focused coping style and emotion-focused coping style. However, there was negative correlation with negative emotional-focused coping style in male students while there was positive correlation with positive- focused coping style and negative correlation with negative emotional-focused coping style in female students.

Extroversion in both male and female among students predicted the use of problem-focused and positive emotional-focused coping style. Conscientiousness was positively correlated with problem-focused coping style and negatively correlated with negative emotional-focused coping style in both male and female students. Neuroticism was negatively correlated with positive emotional-focused coping style (Karimzade & Besharat, 2011).

In view of gender differences in personality traits it was concluded through a meta-analysis that there were generally constant across ages, years of data collection, educational levels, and nations. (Feingold, 1994). However, gender differences were found in female to have a higher score on neuroticism, extroversion and agreeableness than men and thus significant difference was evident in this study (Weisberg, 2001). The coping styles of individual differ from each other. Likewise, gender differences in using coping styles is found to be true in some of the studies carried out.

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The gender difference in coping and stress are also evident in previous studies conducted. Females had a higher level of stress than male. It is also to be noted that emotional-focused coping was employed by females when compared to male. The types of coping strategies which females often utilized were self-distraction, emotional support, instrumental support and venting. (Graves, 2021)

Sample

Participants consisted of 120 college students in which it consisted of 60 male and 60 female in Manipur aged between 18 years- 24 years. The research design used was correlation design. The data was collected using random sampling method. In this study, voluntary and participants were ensured anonymity and confidentiality in their responses.

The self-administered questionnaires were given to the participants and sufficient time was allotted to complete it.

Instruments

To assess personality, NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) by McCrae & Costa (1988) was used. It consists of 60 items. These items assess five dimensions of Personality which are Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. Each dimension has 12 items. Each item in the test has to be responded on a five-point rating scale. there are reverse scores under each item.

Coping Response Inventory (CRI) Adult Form was developed by Moss (1992). It consists of 48 items. There are eight dimensions which are; Logical Analysis (L.A), Positive Reappraisal (P.R), Seeking Guidance and Support (S.G), Problem Solving (P.S), Cognitive Avoidance (C.A), Acceptance of resignation (A.R), Seeking Alternative Rewards (S.R), Emotional Discharge (E.D). The coping style is broadly classified into two such as approach coping style and avoidance coping style. Each item has to be responded on a four-point scale. In scoring, there are no reverse scores.

The demographic detail was given along with the rest of the questionnaires.

Procedure

Table 1 *Distribution of mean \pm SD of personality traits and coping styles in college students.*

Variable	N	Gender	Mean \pm SD	Min	Max
Neuroticism	60	Female	37.7 \pm 7.8	25	52
	60	Male	36.95 \pm 6.01	22	48
Extroversion	60	Female	36.84 \pm 5.64	28	49
	60	Male	37.69 \pm 5.58	28	47
Openness	60	Female	35.69 \pm 4.74	30	43
	60	Male	36.84 \pm 5.64	30	45
Agreeableness	60	Female	37.54 \pm 3.54	29	44
	60	Male	37.99 \pm 6.17	27	39
Conscientiousness	60	Female	37.35 \pm 5.54	26	49
	60	Male	39.84 \pm 5.69	31	48
Approach coping style	60	Female	65.92 \pm 6.73	56	80
	60	Male	65.16 \pm 6.69	50	78
Avoidance coping style	60	Female	62.42 \pm 6.75	50	77
	60	Male	61.6 \pm 6.01	6.01	76

Note. N =number of participants, SD=Standard Deviation, min=minimum, max=maximum

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Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores of both female and male. Personality traits consists of five domains namely; neuroticism, extroversion, openness and agreeableness. Coping response inventory has eight domains namely; Logical analysis, positive reappraisal, seeking guidance support, problem solving, cognitive avoidance, acceptance of resignation, seeking alternative rewards and emotional discharge. They are broadly classified into two groups which are Approach coping and Avoidance coping.

Table 2 Correlation between personality traits and coping response

Variable	N	Approach Coping style 'r'	Avoidance Coping style 'r'
Neuroticism	120	.072	.574**
Extroversion	120	.307**	-.195*
Openness	120	.603**	.026
Agreeableness	120	-.163	.574**
Conscientiousness	120	.323**	.071

Note: n=120, *r< .05 level (2 tailed), **r<.01 level (2 tailed), r=correlation value

Hypothesis 1 predicted that there will be no relationship between personality traits and coping styles among college students.

Table 2 shows the results obtained there was a positive relationship between neuroticism and avoidance coping style (r=.574; <.01), extroversion was found to have a negative relationship with avoidance coping style (r=-.195; < .05). Agreeableness had a positive relationship with avoidance coping style (r=.574; <.01). Extroversion was found to have positive relation with approach coping style (r=.307; <.01), openness with approach coping style (r=.603; <.01), conscientiousness had a positive relationship with approach coping style (r=.323; <.01).

Table 3 shows the gender differences in personality traits among college students

Variable	N Female (n=60), Male (n=60)	t- ratio
Neuroticism	120	.961
Extroversion	120	.409
Openness	120	.788
Agreeableness	120	.481
Conscientiousness	120	.59

Note: N= 120, degrees of freedom; df =118

Hypothesis 2 states that there will be no gender difference in personality traits among college students. From the above finding, table 3 showed that there were no gender differences in personality traits among college students.

Table 4 shows the gender differences in coping styles among college students.

Variable	N Female (n=60), Male (n=60)	t-ratio
Approach coping	120	.541
Avoidance coping	120	.882

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Hypothesis 3 predicts that there will be no gender difference in coping styles among colleges students. Table 4 showed that there were no gender differences in coping styles among college students.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to study the personality traits in reference to gender and coping styles among college students in Manipur. From the findings of this study, it is shown that personality traits have a relationship with coping styles in college students. The personality trait, neuroticism had a positive relationship with avoidance coping style. This is supported by studies that confirms the relation between neuroticism and avoidance or emotion coping style (Saduu, Usman & Tunde, 2013). The relation between neuroticism and avoidance coping style is theoretically relevant and expected. To explain this finding, it can be stated that individuals with neuroticism tend to have general tendency to experience negative emotions (Costa & Macrae, 1992) which could be the reason why they involve in negative emotion focused coping such as avoidance and emotional discharge. Neuroticism was not significant with approach coping style which was obvious as stated by other studies too. On assessing personality trait, extraversion it was found to be significantly related to approach coping style and negatively related to avoidance coping style. This is in support to the study by (Panaitescu, 2018) where positive relation was found between extraversion and active coping style which means that they tend to adopt more problem focused coping. Extraverts are usually individuals that are characterized as sociable, energetic, and assertive and due to their sociability, extraverted people tend to have stronger support systems in times of difficulty. Extraversion was also found to be negatively related to avoidance coping style in this study which supports the study in which when extroversion is negatively correlated with avoidance coping, which indicates that passive coping or avoidance coping is not significantly used by extroverts. (Bosworth, Feaganes, Vitaliano, Mark, and Siegler, 2001). The third personality trait is Openness to experience. In this present study it was found that there was a positive relationship with approach coping style. Openness to experience is related to perceiving events as challenges rather than threats and to positive appraisals of coping resources (Penley & Tomaka 2002, Vollrath 2001). Openness involves the tendency to be imaginative which may facilitate engagement coping strategies that require considering new perspectives, such as cognitive restructuring and problem solving, but may also facilitate use of disengagement strategies such as wishful thinking. This personality trait was not significant to avoidance coping style. Agreeableness in this study showed to have positive relationship with avoidance coping style and no relation with approach coping style. Agreeableness involves high levels of trust and concern for others because those high in agreeableness tend to have strong social networks agreeableness may predict social support coping by which they depend on others. The present finding contradicts with studies like Karimzade & Besharat (2011) who found that Agreeableness was positively correlated with problem-focused and positive emotional- focused coping styles. Another study also found that agreeableness was related to active focused coping. (Francoise, 2009). In studying the relationship between conscientiousness and coping styles it was found that it had a positive relationship with approach coping style. Conscientiousness implies persistence, self-discipline, organization, achievement orientation, and a deliberative approach (Caspi, Roberts, Shiner, 2005, McCrae & John 1992). The planful, disciplined properties of this trait s facilitate problem solving and make disengagement less likely which could have contributed to it. Conscientiousness relates to perceiving events as challenges rather than threats and to positive appraisals of coping resources which supports the finding of the study. (Penley & Tomaka 2002, Vollrath 2001).

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In the current study, gender differences were not found on the personality traits and coping styles among college students. However, this is in contrary to the finding where gender differences were found on personality traits particularly neuroticism, extroversion and agreeableness (Weisberg,2001). On studying the coping styles in male and female it was found that female tend to use more of emotion coping style than male which brings gender differences in the coping style used (Graves,2021). The findings of the present study may simply indicate that there is no difference between the genders on these variables. In other words, men and women may share more similarities in coping styles and personality traits than they do differences. While there are clearly differences between men and women, this study did not find them on these variables.

CONCLUSION

From the study it can be concluded that there is a relationship between personality traits and coping styles. Relationship between neuroticism and avoidance coping style; extraversion and approach coping style; negative relationship between extraversion and avoidance coping style; openness and approach coping style; agreeableness and avoidance coping; conscientiousness and approach coping style. No gender differences were found in personality traits and coping styles.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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