

## Coping, Optimism and Patience in Psychology and Non-Psychology Students

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### ABSTRACT

Coping refers to the strategies, efforts and initiatives taken up by the individual to deal with their environment and the stress response. Optimism is considered to be a tendency toward two aspects: hope and the belief that what will occur and is occurring is the best possible of the alternatives. Patience can be defined as the inclination of an individual to maintain calm while waiting when faced with frustrating stimuli. The aim of this study is to establish the relationship between coping, optimism and patience and to explore the difference in these three on the basis of chosen subject. The sample consisted of 100 students ranging from the age of 18-25 years. Pearson correlation and t-test were used. The results of the study show that coping, optimism and patience are significantly correlated to one another. It was also found that psychology students were significantly higher on coping and patience for daily hassles than non-psychology students. There is a large scope for studies to be conducted on psychology students to identify how certain traits can be related to the subject and vice versa.

**Keywords:** Coping, Optimism, Patience, Psychology, Students

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) tried to explain the stress model by defining it in terms of the continuous interaction between the individual and their environment. If the individual perceived his/her personal resources to not be enough to meet the needs and demands of the environment, stress occurs which is followed by coping. Hence, coping, from their perspective could be defined as multidimensional endeavors of an individual to deal with and respond to the demands of their surroundings. Coping could mean many things but it usually refers to the strategies, efforts and initiatives taken up by the individual to deal with their environment and the stress response. (Freire et al., 2020) There are a number of ways to differentiate between copings styles and types. One common approach differentiates the various strategies on the basis of the individual's dimension: cognitive, emotional and behavioral. Cognitive coping strategies target the thoughts and internal cognitions of the individual and is usually adopted when the individual cannot do much about the stressor and hence, targets his/her own internal thought processes. Emotional coping strategies focus on the effective and emotional experiences of the individual so that they are better prepared to deal with the stressor. Behavioral coping strategies are actions that individual takes to cope with their stress, especially in situations where the individual

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## Coping, Optimism and Patience in Psychology and Non-Psychology Students

has some control and scope of power over the stressor factor. Coping is very widely studied today because of its relevance in every stage and every facet of life. Given its pervasive nature, a number of efforts have been taken to understand its relation with multiple other aspects and what individual factors may contribute to its adaptive nature.

Optimism may be considered as a predisposition to approaching life more positively. It highlights a tendency toward two aspects: hope and the belief that what will occur and is occurring is the best possible of the alternatives. A lot has been said about this concept, both positive and negative. Some ridicule it as being a bias while other school of scholars believe it to be the answer for many human struggles. (Conversano et al., 2010) The dispositional approach to optimism adopts a trait view of optimism where it is viewed as a personality characteristic. It is explained as a tendency to view the individual's life as a whole from a positive perspective. Optimism has been studied from various perspectives and has been consistently found to be associated with other positive dimensions such as well-being, resilience and so on. (Conversano et al., 2010)

Patience can be defined as the inclination of an individual to maintain calm while waiting when faced with frustrating stimuli. Patience, often considered a virtue has universal applicability. Often it accompanies a temporal or time aspect but can also be related with situations that are just difficult irrespective of the temporal aspect. Patience, like most other aspects, can be approached both as a trait, a relatively permanent aspect of the personality or a state, a situation-based behavior. While patience may not always be maintained, its requirement is inevitable just as waiting is. Patience is correlated with various dimensions of well-being and other positive facets. Three types of patience may be identified based on the situation it is a requisite in: interpersonal patience which is relevant in social situations involving other individuals and hence, some form of waiting involving other's role. Life hardship patience is broader in nature and refers to patience required in bigger life events and on a larger scale and dimension. The last type of patience is daily hassles patience and refers to the patience exhibited when dealing with the trivial day to day occurrences which often appear to be very frustrating. Patience is not as widely studied as other dimensions of personality. However, the little research that is available highlights on the need to continue exploring this human tendency and to find its relevance in various broad and narrow settings. (Schnitker, 2012)

Priya and Kumar (2020) conducted a study on 200 undergraduate students to find out if there was a difference in coping among psychology versus non-psychology students. The results of the study showed that psychology students indeed had higher coping than non-psychology students.

A study conducted by Wu et al. (2020) on Chinese undergraduate students attempted to understand psychological resilience and positive coping styles among medical and non-medical students. A total of 1743 undergraduate students were a part of the research. The results of this study showed that females and medical students scored significantly more on positive coping styles as compared to males and non-medical students.

A study on optimism and resilience among 100 university students during the COVID-19 pandemic by Maheshwari and Jutta (2020) showed that the two were significantly related among university students.

## Coping, Optimism and Patience in Psychology and Non-Psychology Students

Aleksandar, Natasa and Sonja (2011) conducted a study among psychology students and found that psychology students did have higher levels of secure attachment pattern, higher empathic capacity, better mentalizing, and more positive model of the other. It was also found that the prevalence of the secure attachment pattern and high empathy scores rises with the years spent at studying psychology.

Vedel (2016) conducted a systematic literature research among 13,389 individuals to identify personality differences on the basis of their academic majors. The study showed that psychology students tended to have a significantly higher score in openness to experience than other individuals.

Pacheco and Kamble (2016) conducted a research on 500 University students of Goa to understand the link between stress, coping and optimism. The results showed that optimism was associated with higher positive coping strategies such as positive reinterpretation and growth, use of instrumental social support, active coping, acceptance, suppression of competing activities, and planning, and negatively related to mental disengagement, behavioural disengagement, focus on and venting of emotions, denial, and religious coping. In another study, Reed (2016) found that coping flexibility and optimism were significantly correlated with each other among university students.

A study conducted by Schnitker and Emmons (2007) found that that patient people tend to be more cooperative, more empathic, more equitable, and more forgiving.

Schnitker (2012) also found that patience was associated with higher agreeableness, a personality characteristic.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Sample*

The study is conducted on 50 psychology and 50 non-psychology students totalling to 100. The age group of the subjects for this study is 18-25 years. Purposive sampling technique is used for this study.

### *Instruments*

- 1. COPING SCALE:** This is a 13-item questionnaire developed by Hamby, Grych and Banyard (2013). The tool is partially adopted from Holahan and Moo's (1987) coping strategies scale and Spitzberg and Copach's (2008) framework. The items are scored on a 4-points scale. The questionnaire assesses coping in terms of two dimensions: appraisal and behavioural techniques of coping. The cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was 0.88. Validity was established from strong correlations with other tools measuring regulatory strengths. Higher scores in this questionnaire indicates higher coping.
- 2. REVISED LIFE ORIENTATION TEST:** This 10-item test revised by Scheier, Carver and Bridges (1994) measures optimism and pessimism. The items are rated on a 5-points scale. The test has a reliability alpha score of 0.76 and high validity in terms of strong correlations with tests measuring related dimensions. The pessimism items may be reversed and scored to establish a total score of optimism.
- 3. 3-FACTOR PATIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE:** This 11-item questionnaire authored by Schnitker (2012) measures patience on three dimensions: interpersonal patience, life hardship patience and daily hassles patience. The items are scored on a 5-point scale and two of these items are reversed scored. The Cronbach's alpha score

## Coping, Optimism and Patience in Psychology and Non-Psychology Students

of the test is 0.80. The validity of the questionnaire is also established with strong correlations with scales measuring related traits and aspects.

### **Procedure**

Informed consent was taken from the respondents and the questionnaire was administered. The respondents are asked to answer according to what suits them the best. The scores of the respondents are calculated and analysed to study them in relation to the objectives of the study. The data was analysed using measures of central tendency, measures of dispersion, correlation and t-test.

## RESULTS

**Table 1.0: Descriptive statistics of age, subject, coping, optimism and patience levels**

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age	3.69	1.69
Subject	1.5	0.5
Coping	35.94	5.8
Optimism	19.22	3.2
Patience	38.53	6.44

**Table 2.0 and 3.0: t-test scores of coping, optimism, patience and patience for daily hassles (subscale of patience) on the basis of chosen subject (psychology and non-psychology students)**

T-test for Equality of Means	
Coping	-2.48
Optimism	0.36
Patience	-1.8
Patience for Daily Hassles	-1.2

	t-test	df	Sig.
Coping	-2.174	98	0.032
Optimism	0.559	97.271	0.577
Patience	-1.419	97.436	0.159
Patience for Daily Hassles	-2.366	97.097	0.02

As shown in the table, we can infer that there is a significant difference in coping and patience for daily hassles on the basis of chosen subject. This means that psychology students have higher levels of coping and patience for daily hassles as compared to non-psychology students. There was no significant difference found in optimism and overall patience scores among psychology and non-psychology students.

**Table 4.0: Correlation scores of coping, optimism and patience**

		Optimism	Patience	Coping
Coping	Pearson Correlation	.297**	.362**	1
Optimism	Pearson Correlation	1	.197*	.297**

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Coping, Optimism and Patience in Psychology and Non-Psychology Students

As shown in the table, there is a significant positive correlation between coping, optimism and patience. This can be inferred as higher levels of one of these are associated with higher levels of the other two variables.

Hypothesis 1 states that there will be no significant difference in coping, optimism and patience on the basis of subject chosen, i.e., psychology and non-psychology. The results of this research show that there is a significant difference in coping levels between psychology and non-psychology students. This means that psychology students have higher coping levels than non-psychology students. These results are in line with the research conducted by Priya and Kumar (2020) where under-graduation psychology students showed higher levels of coping as compared to non-psychology students. The results of this study also showed that there is no significant difference in optimism and patience on the basis of psychology and non-psychology students. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is partially rejected.

Hypothesis 2 states that there will be no significant relationship between coping, optimism and patience. The results of this study show that coping is significantly and positively related to optimism and patience and optimism is also related in the same manner to patience. This means that an increase in any of the three variables is associated with an increase in the remaining two variables. These results are in line with the study conducted by Pacheco and Kamble (2016) which showed that optimism and coping were positively and significantly related to one another. A study conducted by Qodariah and Puspitasari (2016) showed similar results where they found that patience and coping was significantly correlated with each other in their sample of mothers of autistic children.

Some of the limitations of the study were however, noted. The study was conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study constituted of a relatively small sample size of 100 participants. There is not much research conducted on the given variables on the Indian population, thus limiting the evidence and support for the obtained results. There are also various implications of this study. There is a large scope for studies to be conducted on psychology students to identify how certain traits can be related to the subject and vice versa. There is also a need for further research on the chosen variables, especially so on patience as there is limited study conducted on this variable.

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## Coping, Optimism and Patience in Psychology and Non-Psychology Students

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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