

Exploring the Relationship Between Humour Styles, Coping Strategies and Resilience Across Adulthood

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ABSTRACT

To study the association of humour styles, coping strategies and resilience across adulthood using correlational study design with 197 Indian adults using Humour Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), Brief COPE Inventory and Brief Resilience Scale. The results showed a negative correlation between affiliative and problem focused coping; affiliative humour style and emotion focused; self-enhancing humour style and emotion-focused coping strategies; self-defeating and aggressive humour styles with problem-focused coping strategies. Resilience negatively correlated with self-defeating humour style, emotion-focused coping strategies and avoidance coping strategies. The results also found a statistically significant difference in aggressive humour style and problem focused coping strategies based on age. Thus, the study gives a surface level insight on the relationship between humour, coping and resilience, indicating further research possibilities.

Keywords: *Humour Styles, Coping Strategies, Resilience, Adulthood*

The usage of laughter to bounce back while coping with life problems is an area of interest in recent times. This study, “Exploring the Relationship Between Humour Styles, Coping Strategies and Resilience Across Adulthood” seeks to examine this relationship between humour styles, coping strategies and resilience in Indian adults. It can help us to understand if humour-based training as a coping skill in personalised interventions can be combined with others skills while adjusting and enduring in the face of adversity as individuals build resilience.

Humour Styles

Humour styles are a reflection of the ways people use humour to change their viewpoints and cope (Dozois et al., 2009). Self-enhancing and facilitative humour, aggressive and self-defeating these four humour styles were proposed by Martin et. al.(2003)

Coping Strategy

According to Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck, “A coping strategy refers to how people respond to stress as they contend with real-life problems (Taylor, 2024).

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Resilience

Resilience, according to the American Psychological Association, is the capacity to successfully adapt to and adjust through difficult or challenging life circumstances, especially by exhibiting mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility in response to challenges from the intrinsic as well as the extrinsic (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to a recent study (Simione & Gnagnarella, 2023) humour can help reduce psychological discomfort, especially when there is medium-to-high humour participation. Additionally, studies have revealed a negative correlation between affiliative and self-enhancing humour types and fear of ridicule (Vagnoli et al., 2022).

Study also highlighted the protective role that humour plays in promoting happiness, especially when it is in line with positive humour styles (Kennison, 2022).

A significant correlation between humour and resilience as well as creativity, happiness, and self-worth was found, highlighting the contribution of humour to the development of creativity and resilience in healthcare professionals (Elsayed et al., 2020; Conway, 2020).

The study established the relationship between personality characteristics, coping strategies, and subjective resilience while highlighting the resilience variables' mediation function in explaining variance in resilience scores (Alonso-Tapia, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study the association of humour styles, coping strategies and resilience across adulthood.

Objectives

- To examine the association between humour styles, coping strategies and resilience.
- To compare humour styles, coping strategies and resilience in adulthood.

Hypothesis

- H1: There is a significant relationship between humour styles, coping strategies, and resilience among adults.
- H2: There are significant differences in humour styles, coping strategies, and resilience among adults.

Research design

A correlational research design is employed in the study. A correlational research design is used when researchers want to determine if there is a relationship between two variables, but it does not necessarily mean that one variable causes change in the other (Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2010).

Sample

The sample size for this study consists of 197 adults (Male=95, Female=102). The participants' age was 18 years old and above. The study was conducted using random sampling technique.

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Inclusion Criteria:

- Age 18+ years old
- Fluent in English language
- Able to provide informed consent
- No previous diagnosis of dementia or other severe cognitive impairments

Exclusion Criteria:

- Age below 18 years old
- Not fluent in English language
- Unable to provide informed consent due to cognitive or psychological limitations
- Diagnosed with dementia or other severe cognitive impairments

Tools Employed

- **Humour Styles Questionnaire (HSQ):** Humour Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) is a 32-item scale introduced in 2003 by Rod A. Martin which aims to measure self-reported inclinations towards humour, categorising them into distinct styles such as affiliative, self-enhancing, self-deprecating, and aggressive. Internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) ranged from .77 to .81
- **Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (COPE) Inventory:** The Brief COPE, introduced by Carver et al. in 1997 as a short version of the original Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced Inventory, consists of 28 items aimed at measuring the utilisation of different coping strategies frequently employed to manage stress. Internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) ranged from .72 to .82.
- **Brief Resilience Scale:** The Brief Resilience Scale, developed by Smith et al. in 2008, consists of just six items and serves as an effective measure to evaluate an individual's resilience. Internal reliability was found to be .87.

Data analysis

The data was analysed using Pearson's correlation and one way ANOVA in the SPSS statistical software.

RESULTS

Table 1 Pearson's Correlation

	Aff.	S-E	Agg.	S-D	PFC	EFC	Av.C	Res.
Aff.	1							
S-E	-0.165	1						
Agg.	-0.235	0.21	1					
S-D	-0.143	0.213	0.124	1				
PFC	-.274**	.415**	0.141	-0.034	1			
EFC	-.209**	.227**	0.14	.206**	0.567	1		
Av.C	-0.115	-0.029	0.036	.359**	-0.025	0.364	1	
Res.	0.033	0.062	-0.072	-.217**	0.056	-.184**	-.186**	1

*Note: **p < 0.01 level.*

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A correlation test was conducted to examine the association between the humour styles, three coping strategies and resilience level. The Table 1 displays very low but statistically significant negative correlation between affiliative humour style(Aff.) and problem focused coping(PFC), affiliative humour style(Aff.) and emotion focused coping(EFC) with a correlation of $-.274$ and $-.209$, respectively at p-value of 0.01, indicating that higher usage of affiliative humour style is associated with low utilisation of problem focused as well as emotion focused coping strategies.

The Table 1 illustrates that there is a very low but statistically significant positive correlation between self-enhancing humour style(S-E) and emotion focused coping(EFC) with a correlation of $.227$; self-enhancing humour style(S-E) and problem focused coping(PFC) with a correlation of $.414$ and self-defeating humour styles(S-D) and emotion focused coping strategies(EFC) with $.206$ correlation, all at p-value of 0.01 while aggressive humour style(Agg.) and problem focused coping(PFC) had a correlation of $.141$ at p-value of 0.05, suggesting an inverse relationship among these constructs.

The Table 1 showed that there is a low but statistically significant positive correlation between aggressive humour styles and emotion focused coping strategies with a correlation of $.140$ at p-value of 0.05 and self-defeating humour style and avoidance coping strategies with a correlation of $.359$ at p-value of 0.01.

Resilience was found to be negatively correlated with self-defeating humour style, emotion-focused coping strategies and avoidance coping strategies with a correlation of $-.217$, $-.184$ and $-.186$ respectively at p-value of 0.01, indicating that higher levels of usage of self-defeating humour, emotion-focused coping strategies and avoidance coping strategies are associated with lower levels of resilience and vice versa.

Table 2 One- way ANOVA Test

Measure	Group 1			Group 2			Group 3			P-value	F Criteria
	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD		
Aff.	104	25.31	4.795	68	25.49	5.924	25	25.8	6.807	0.921	0.082
S-E	104	32.98	6.095	68	33.62	5.808	25	31.4	6.714	0.298	1.218
Agg.	104	23.89	4.803	68	25.82	5.436	25	23.32	5.274	0.026	3.709
S-D	104	26.12	6.031	68	25.24	6.341	25	23.64	5.929	0.178	1.74
PFC	104	23.02	4.528	68	24.87	4.186	25	24.12	4.438	0.026	3.703
EFC	104	30.14	5.469	68	31.18	4.509	25	30.64	4.689	0.426	0.858
Av.C	104	16.81	3.821	68	15.65	3.254	25	16.72	3.824	0.113	2.208
Res.	104	3.1	0.54	68	3.11	0.57	25	3.2	0.63	0.718	0.332

One way ANOVA was conducted to understand the differences among three groups of age in adulthood as per the latest categorisation, which included Group 1(18-35: young adulthood), Group 2 (36-64: middle adulthood) and Group 3 (65- above: older adulthood).

The test results showed a statistically significant difference in aggressive humour style and problem focused coping strategies among the three group means with $F(3.709) = 0.026$, $p < 0.005$ and $F(3.703) = 15.68$, $p < 0.005$.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between four different humour styles namely, affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating, along with three coping strategies, namely problem focused, emotion focused and avoidance focused, and resilience. The results showed a very low but significant negative correlation between affiliative humour style and problem focused coping as well as affiliative humour style and emotion focused coping indicating an inverse relationship between them, which means a reduction in use of coping techniques that are emotion- and problem-focused is linked to increased use of affiliative humour. Furthermore, the study revealed a low but significant positive correlation between self-enhancing humour style and emotion-focused coping strategies, self-defeating and aggressive humour styles with problem-focused coping strategies indicating a direct relation between the variables. This means that an increase in the usage of self-enhancing humour style is linked with increased usage of emotion focused coping strategies, and vice versa. Likewise, increase in usage of negative humour styles such as self-defeating and aggressive humour styles is linked directly with problem focused coping strategies. The results also show that aggressive humour styles and emotion focused coping strategies as well as self-defeating humour style and avoidance coping strategies have a low but statistically significant positive correlation, indicating an existence of direct association. These findings can be supported by the study of Kruczek & Basińska (2018) which showed a correlation between coping strategies and use of humour as coping with stress. Resilience was found to be negatively correlated with self-defeating humour style, emotion-focused coping strategies and avoidance coping strategies.

Further the study also examined to see if there are significant differences in humour styles, coping strategies, and resilience among adults, for which the results showed a statistically significant difference in aggressive humour style and problem focused coping strategies among the three group means. This indicates that there is variation in usage of aggressive humour styles as well as problem focused coping strategies based on age which can be supported by Kruczek & Basińska's 2018 study that showed there is a less probability of younger individuals than older adults to use humour as coping strategy or a stress reliever.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to understand the relationship between humour styles, coping strategies, and resilience in Indian adults. While the four humour styles indicate a specific way of coping with stress, coping strategies give an overview of the ways the individuals use to cope with stress and develop the potential to be resilient amidst life's problems and setbacks. The study found a low but significant negative correlation between affiliative humour style and problem-focused coping, and an inverse relationship between affiliative humour style and emotion-focused coping. A low but significant positive correlation was found between self-enhancing humour style and emotion-focused coping strategies, and a direct relationship between aggressive humour styles and problem-focused coping strategies. The study also found significant differences in aggressive humour style and problem-focused coping strategies among adults. The study highlights the relationship between humour, coping, and resilience, revealing their impact on the psychological well-being of Indian adults.

Limitation

The study does not include the understanding of where the difference in the group means comes. This hampers the implications of the minute results that the study has achieved to reflect upon. A wide array of factors such as gender, socio-economic status, education

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qualification that can impact the usage of humour styles, coping strategies and resilience as they can impact the resource availability to navigate through life's hurdles. The study also lacks an equal representation of the population in the sample in terms of age, hence restricting its potential to generalise.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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