

Personality Traits, Emotion Regulation and Coping Strategies among Adult Females: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

There is a long list of researches upon these variables and their relationship. But there have been fewer studies using the HEXACO model of personality. Since it is true that personality traits make up for individual differences which in turn influences the individual's usage of various emotion regulation and coping strategies. Emotion regulation and coping have been doubted to have overlap but their independency has also been shown. Therefore, it will be helpful to understand the relationship between these variables. This study aims to take the HEXACO model and find its relationship with emotion regulation and coping strategies. It is also aimed to understand the relationship between emotion regulation and coping strategies. The sample for this study consisted of 104 females whose age ranged from 18-30. Three questionnaires—HEXACO-60 (Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience), Brief COPE (Problem-Focused, Emotion-Focused, and Avoidant coping strategies), and ERQ-S (Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression) – were used to collect the data. Correlation was implemented to find out the relationship between these variables. Through this analysis it was found that the emotion regulation variable, expressive suppression was not correlated with any of the personality variables. On the other hand, cognitive reappraisal was found to have correlations with personality variables honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, and agreeableness. The coping variable, avoidant coping strategies, was correlated with only honesty-humility. While the problem-focused variable, was correlated with honesty-humility, emotionality, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Emotion-focused variable was not found to be correlated with any of the personality variables.

Keywords: *Personality Traits, Emotion Regulation, Coping Strategies, Adult Females*

Emotions are one of the most important aspects in an individual's life. Not only are they essential for our quality of life but also give meaning to our existence (Solomon, 2025; Purnamaningsih, 2017). Emotion is a conscious mental reaction and a subjective experience. It is usually accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes (Solomon, 2025). Aristotle wrote that emotions can change men and have an effect on their decisions, while being accompanied with pain or pleasure (Solomon, 2025). In order to study emotion, it has been understood on the basis of the following three components:

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cognitive-experiential, behavioural-expressive, and physiological-biochemical (Purnamaningsih, 2017). The cognitive-experiential component refers to our feelings, i.e. how we feel when we experience emotions. The behavioural-expressive component is related to how we express our emotions. And the physiological-biochemical component refers to alterations in our physical state (Purnamaningsih, 2017). When an individual alters the stimuli or modulates their responses related to these three components of their emotional response, it is known as emotional regulation (Eisenberg et al., 2004).

It has been suggested (Denollet et al., 2008) that emotions not only aid in communication with others, through the expression of emotions such as anger, sadness, panic, fear, etc. which can help others initiate and moderate their response, but has also been linked to the physiological changes in the body and the nervous system (Strongman, 2003). These physiological changes could be palpitations, muscle tension, increase in blood pressure, etc. (Denollet et al., 2008; Passer & Smith, 2008; Purnamaningsih, 2017). It has also been seen that emotion regulation can have an impact on the individual's physical and mental health (Purnamaningsih, 2017). This information indicates that it is important to manage emotions in one's day-to-day life. Emotion regulation can help with this task. But various ways of regulating emotions can have varying impact on one's health (John & Gross, 2004). It has also been seen that individual differences are present in the use of emotional regulation (Purnamaningsih, 2017).

These individual differences could also manifest due to the individual differences in personality traits. Many studies have shown relationships between emotion regulation and personality traits. Since personality traits also have an impact on coping strategies utilised by an individual, it can be surmised that emotional regulation and coping strategies have a relationship (Hughes et al., 2020; Purnamaningsih, 2017). This relationship has been confirmed by various researches (Monteiro et al., 2014; Wang & Saudino, 2011). There have also been studies related to the interplay between personality traits, emotion regulation, and coping strategies (Compas et al., 2017). Similarly, this study is aimed towards identifying the relationship between personality traits, coping strategies and emotion regulation strategies.

Emotion Regulation Strategies can be divided into two: Antecedent-focused strategies and Response-focused strategies (Gross, 2007). Antecedent-focused strategies are a positive form of emotion regulation, while response-focused are a negative form of emotion regulation (Gross, 2001). From these two the following are the more focused upon strategies: Reappraisal (Antecedent-focused) and Suppression (Response-focused) (Gross, 2001). Although there are no limitations to the usage of any strategy before, during, or after the stimuli, antecedent-focused strategies are generally used before or early on in the experience of an emotion evoking stimuli, whereas Response-focused strategies are usually used towards the end or after the emotion evoking stimuli (Gross, 1998).

Reappraisal is a cognitive change method in which an individual cognitively neutralizes any emotion evoking stimuli by reevaluating the stimuli in such a way that it decreases its emotional impact (Gross, 2001; Gross & John, 2003). For example, rather than ruminating over the death of a friend, an individual thinks upon the cherished memories that he has with his friend. Thus, reappraisal decreases the experiential, behavioural, and physiological response to any stimuli (Gross, 2001).

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Suppression, on the other hand, involves actively inhibiting one's expressions that are generated due to an emotional stimulus (Gross, 2001; Gross & John, 2003). For example, a person trying not to cry at their friend's funeral. Suppression works well for hiding behavioural expressions but does not have the same effect on the experiential response to emotion, and might even increase the physiological response (Gross, 2001).

Personality can be defined as an individual's unique characteristics related to thinking, feeling, and behaving (Holzman, 2025). Personality has been an important topic of study and discussion, not only in the field of psychology, but also in everyday conversations of people, in general. It has been studied for generations in psychology with even Sigmund Freud having his own views on personality. The scholars of ancient Greece had their perspective on personality. There has even been mention of a personality theory in the Vedas and the Bhagvada Gita (Kavirayani, 2018). Among the modern minds of psychology, many have given their own theories of personality, but one theory has been researched and expanded upon more than the other theories.

Eysenck originally gave three dimensions of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, and psychoticism. These were traits that an individual may exhibit to an extent. Later, these were expanded upon by Costa and McCrae (1992). They removed psychoticism and added agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness. They called these five factors as basic dimensions of personality (Costa and McCrae 1992). Recently, this five-factor model has been modified by Ashton et al. (2004) into a six-factor model which includes honesty-humility (H), emotionality (E), extraversion (X), agreeableness (A), conscientiousness (C), and openness to experience (O). It is known as the HEXACO model and has been used as a form of personality assessment method (Ashton et al., 2007).

Coping can simply be said to be an individual's attempt at overcoming adversities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Taylor & Stanton, 2007; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Coping is employed in response to stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping is regarded to be inseparable from both their inner emotional state and the life-strains experienced by the individual. Coping can be understood by examining it in the context of the problems that plague individuals and with which they have to contend. These problems may also have an impact on their emotional self (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). The resources available to an individual to help in coping have an effect on the coping methods used by them (Taylor & Stanton, 2007).

There have been many researches upon the topic of coping methods that are utilised by an individual. Since there are many individual differences in coping (Carver et al., 1989), researchers have tried to classify the methods of coping into groups. Folkman and Lazarus (1985) grouped these methods into problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. This distinction is the major division between coping strategies. Carver (1997) added a third grouping by the name of avoidant coping strategies to these major divisions. The inventory made by Carver (1997) is based upon these three distinctions and is one of the most popular methods to assess coping style.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Personality has been explained in many ways. One of those ways is the six factor model, given by Lee and Ashton (2004) in order to provide six basic dimensions of personality. They acknowledge the five factor model but recognize its limitations (Ashton et al., 2004)

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and therefore established the six-factor model (Ashton et al., 2004; Lee & Ashton, 2004). Since these are also basic dimensions of personality, they are influential in an individual's decision making. The influence of six factor model on emotion regulation strategies can be understood through the following researches:

- Personality as an overall concept has always been found to be related to emotion regulation in a meaningful way. It has been found in a meta-analysis that adaptive emotion regulation strategies such as reappraisal, problem solving, and mindfulness are positively related to extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience and negatively related to neuroticism while the inverse is true for maladaptive (avoidance and suppression) emotion regulation strategies (Barańczuk, 2019). In another study (Purnamaningsih, 2017), the all of the five personality dimensions were negatively related to suppression. For reappraisal, only neuroticism was negatively related and the other four dimensions were positively related (Purnamaningsih, 2017). Gresham and Gullone (2012) also found in their study that suppression was positively related to neuroticism and negatively related to the other four dimensions, and the inverse was true for reappraisal.

There have been fewer studies with the HEXACO model of personality. Although, four of its dimensions coincide with four dimensions of five factor model (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience), and emotionality is comparable to neuroticism or emotional stability; the addition of honesty-humility sets the HEXACO model apart from the five factor model (Lee & Ashton, 2004). Therefore, this study sets out to examine the relationship of honesty-humility with emotion regulation along with other dimensions of personality. It is hypothesised that, except emotionality, the other five dimensions of HEXACO model will be correlated positively with problem-focused coping strategies, and negatively with avoidant coping strategies. Since the emotion-focused strategies consist of both positive and negative strategies no hypothesis will be constructed for emotion-focused coping strategies.

In the field of psychological research, personality and coping go hand-in-hand. It is very well researched topic upon which many first time researchers like to work. Being a well-researched topic, one can easily identify the relationship between personality dimensions and coping strategies. This relationship is inferred from the following researches:

- A meta-analysis (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007) found that neuroticism was more associated with negative coping styles, whereas extraversion and conscientiousness were related to positive coping styles. Similarly, in another meta-analysis study, optimism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were positively associated with engagement (positive style) coping, and negatively with disengagement (negative style) coping, with extraversion being positively associated to engagement coping, and neuroticism being positively associated with disengagement coping (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Relating to gender, it was found in a study that neuroticism was positively related with avoidance coping strategy (Jung, 1995). In a study, neuroticism has been found to be negatively related to positive emotion-focused coping and positively related to negative emotion-focused coping (Karimzade & Besharat, 2011). The same study also found that problem-focused was positively related to extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Negative emotion-focused was found to be negatively related to agreeableness and conscientiousness. Lastly, positive emotion-focused was found to

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be positively related to extraversion and agreeableness (Karimzade & Besharat, 2011).

From the above studies it can be determined that adaptive personality dimensions (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) are positively related to positive coping styles (problem-focused coping and positive emotion-focused coping) and negatively to negative coping styles (negative emotion-focused and avoidant coping). Whereas maladaptive personality dimension (neuroticism) is positively related to negative coping styles and negatively related to positive coping styles. Although honesty-humility is not mentioned in any of the studies, it is an adaptive personality dimension and will be associated positively with positive coping styles and negatively with negative coping styles. Since emotionality is comparable to neuroticism, it will be negatively related with positive coping styles and positively related with negative coping styles.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consisted of 104 females between the ages of 18 – 30. The sample was collected through snowball purposive sampling. Participation was completely voluntary and participants were not given any incentive to participate in this study. Contact information was solicited from only those participants who showed interest in receiving their results. The data has been majorly collected from students of Amity University, Lucknow campus, Integral University, and University of Lucknow with 63 individuals residing in Lucknow at the time of the study. The other 41 individuals resided in Delhi and studied at University of Delhi.

Measures

HEXACO-60 Personality Inventory: HEXACO-60 (Ashton & Lee, 2009): It is a revised version of the original 100 item version. This version has 10 items for each of the six personality dimensions (Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience). Each of the six dimensions further has four facets and each facet has at least two questions for its assessment. The test has internal consistency reliability for each dimension. In the college sample it ranges from .77 to .80 and in the community sample it ranges from .73 to .80. These are lower than internal consistencies of the original version. The inventory was validated by correlating the dimensions with NEO-FFI. Correlations were found between the extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and agreeableness of both inventories. Honesty-humility was found to be correlated with agreeableness and emotionality with neuroticism.

Brief-COPE (Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced): Brief COPE (Carver, 1997): It was constructed as a shorter version of the original. This version consists of 28 items with three dimensions (Avoidant, Problem-Focused, and Emotion-Focused). Avoidant and problem-focused contain four facets each and emotion-focused has six facets. Each facet is measured by two questions. Avoidant and problem-focused have 8 items and emotion-focused has 12 items. Exploratory factor analysis and reliability assessment was conducted to test the reliability.

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire – Short form: ERQ-S (Preece et al., 2023): This version is revised from the original 10 item version and consists of two strategies, namely cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression with 3 items under each. Factor analysis was

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conducted to assess internal consistency of the items. Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure reliability and concurrent validity was assessed by comparing the short version with the original.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables of emotion regulation, personality, and coping. Among the emotion regulation strategies, cognitive reappraisal had a mean score of $\bar{x}=10.89$ (SD=2.33), while expressive suppression had a slightly lower mean of $\bar{x}=10.02$ (SD=2.82), suggesting that participants tended to engage in reappraisal slightly more than suppression on average. In terms of personality traits, openness to experience had the highest mean ($\bar{x}=36.21$, SD=5.52), indicating a generally strong tendency among participants toward open-mindedness and intellectual curiosity. With respect to coping strategies, emotion-focused coping had the highest mean ($\bar{x}=28.55$, SD=5.09), followed by problem-focused coping ($\bar{x}=21.56$, SD=4.27), while avoidant coping had the lowest mean ($\bar{x}=14.99$, SD=3.93). This pattern suggests that participants generally preferred more adaptive coping strategies over avoidant coping strategies.

Table 1. Mean and SD scores of emotion regulation strategies, personality dimensions, and coping strategies

	Variables	Mean	SD
Emotion Regulation	Cognitive Reappraisal	10.89	2.33
	Expressive Suppression	10.02	2.82
Personality Dimensions	Agreeableness	31.81	5.90
	Honesty-Humility	33.54	6.40
	Emotionality	32.61	5.46
	Extraversion	32.22	6.47
	Conscientiousness	33.46	5.70
	Openness To Experience	36.21	5.52
Coping Strategies	Avoidant	14.99	3.93
	Problem-Focused	21.56	4.27
	Emotion-Focused	28.55	5.09

Table 2 shows the correlation of personality with emotion regulation and coping variables. They showed that cognitive reappraisal was significantly positively correlated with honesty-humility ($r=.201$, $p<0.05$), extraversion ($r=.356$, $p<0.001$), and agreeableness ($r=.368$, $p<0.001$). Emotionality was significantly negatively correlated with cognitive reappraisal ($r=-.409$, $p<0.001$). Conscientiousness ($r=.146$, $p=.140$) and openness to experience ($r=.080$, $p=.418$) were not significantly related. In contrast, none of the correlations between personality traits and expressive suppression were significant. The avoidant coping strategies was only significantly correlated and negatively correlated with honesty-humility ($r=-.316$, $p<0.001$). Problem-focused coping strategies had positive correlations with conscientiousness ($r=.200$, $p<0.05$), agreeableness ($r=.295$, $p<0.01$), and also honesty-

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humility ($r=.276$, $p<0.01$). Problem-focused was negatively correlated to only emotionality ($r=-.222$, $p<0.05$). Emotion-focused coping strategies was not significantly correlated to any of the personality variables.

Table 2. Correlation table of personality with emotion regulation and coping variables

Personality variables	Emotion Regulation		Coping Strategies		
	Cognitive Reappraisal	Expressive Suppression	Avoidant	Problem-Focused	Emotion-Focused
Honesty-Humility	.201*	-.119	-.316***	.276**	.122
Emotionality	-.409***	-.135	-.110	-.222*	-.114
Extraversion	.356***	-.149	-.039	.108	.042
Agreeableness	.368***	.052	-.132	.295**	.047
Conscientiousness	.146	-.081	-.165	.200*	.021
Openness to Experience	.080	.035	.037	.065	.141

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Through all these analyses it can be summarised that the emotion regulation variable, expressive suppression was not correlated with any of the personality or coping variables. On the other hand, cognitive reappraisal was found to have correlations with personality variables honesty-humility ($r=.201$, $p<0.05$), emotionality ($r=-.409$, $p<0.001$), extraversion ($r=.356$, $p<0.001$), and agreeableness ($r=.368$, $p<0.001$). Furthermore, avoidant coping is correlated to honesty-humility ($r=-.316$, $p<0.001$), and problem-focused coping is correlated to honesty-humility ($r=.276$, $p<0.01$), emotionality ($r=-.222$, $p<0.05$), agreeableness ($r=.295$, $p<0.01$), and conscientiousness ($r=.200$, $p<0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The relationship between these variables has been assessed using correlation. It has already been reported in this study how previous studies have performed their own analysis and found relationships between these variables. Therefore, the relationship between personality and emotion regulation variables will be discussed and then the relationship between personality variables and coping strategies will be discussed. For the cognitive reappraisal variable of emotion regulation, it was found that, as hypothesised, it was positively correlated with honesty-humility, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. These findings are in accordance to a previous study by Barańczuk (2019). Cognitive reappraisal was also negatively correlated with emotionality dimension of personality, as hypothesised. Although, it should be noted that cognitive reappraisal's correlation was not significant with conscientiousness and openness to experience. As such their relation cannot be surmised from this data. As for expressive suppression, none of the values were significant. The non-significant correlation was positive between expressive suppression, and agreeableness and openness to experience, and non-significant negatively correlated with honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, and conscientiousness. These relationships are not in accordance to previous studies (Gresham & Gullone, 2012; Purnamaningsih, 2017) which found expressive suppression to be positively related to neuroticism, which is comparable to emotionality. For the problem-focused coping variable, it was found that emotionality was negatively correlated, and the other five factors were positively correlated. Although the correlation between problem-focused, and extraversion

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and openness to experience were not significant. For the emotion-focused variable none of the correlations were significant but from the values it can be inferred that it is negatively related to emotionality while being positively related to the other five personality dimensions. The correlation direction between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies and personality variables is similar to those of previous studies (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). The avoidant coping variable only had significant negative correlation with honesty-humility but was negatively related to emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and was positively related to openness to experience. The correlation directions of avoidant coping did not follow previous researches (Jung, 1995). Overall, the correlations did have some similarity to previous researches (Karimzade & Besharat, 2011).

Implications

Through this study, the distinction between adaptive (cognitive reappraisal) and maladaptive (expressive suppression) strategies is reinforced, highlighting the importance of understanding which regulation methods are likely to promote better coping outcomes. The lack of significant correlations between expressive suppression and personality traits raises the possibility that suppression is more context-dependent or influenced by social and cultural norms, rather than stable individual differences. The results underscore the value of individualized approaches in mental health interventions. It can be inferred that individuals high in emotionality may benefit from targeted strategies aimed at developing more adaptive forms of emotion regulation. Training programs focused on emotion regulation and stress management may be more effective when tailored to align with an individual's personality traits and emotional tendencies. These findings can inform practices in clinical, educational, and organizational contexts, offering guidance for enhancing resilience, emotional well-being, and coping effectiveness across diverse populations.

Limitations and Future Research

Firstly, this study was conducted solely upon college students limiting the generalizability of this study's result and conclusion. Secondly, a limiting factor of this study's generalizability is the age of the participants which may have varied from 18 – 30 but rarely exceeded 25, and most of the sample population was between the ages of 19 – 23. Thirdly, this study may only be extended over female population due to the study being devoid of male participants. Lastly, social desirability of the participants may have hampered accurate answers on some of the statements regarding negatively perceived variables such as expressive suppression, emotionality and avoidant coping strategies.

Future researches should be conducted with a more diverse sample and inclusive of those not in any educational institution at the time of the study. A sample enriched with individuals from all age ranges should be included in future studies. To counter the complete female sample of this study, male sample should be added in future studies or some of the future studies may focus completely on male sample.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study offer meaningful insights into how personality traits are associated with emotion regulation strategies and coping mechanisms. The result of this study indicates that none of the hypotheses fit perfectly and cannot be completely accepted or rejected. The positive correlations between cognitive reappraisal and traits such as honesty-humility, extraversion, and agreeableness suggest that individuals high in these traits are more likely

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to engage in adaptive emotion regulation strategies. Conversely, the negative association between emotionality and cognitive reappraisal indicates that individuals who are more emotionally sensitive may find it more challenging to cognitively manage their emotional responses. Looking at the relations between personality and coping, emotionality was negatively associated with problem-focused coping, suggesting that individuals high in this trait may be less inclined to address stressors directly. Other traits, such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, and honesty-humility, were generally linked to more adaptive coping styles. Notably, honesty-humility showed a significant negative correlation with avoidant coping, suggesting that individuals high in this trait may be more likely to confront rather than avoid challenges. Tailoring approaches—such as cognitive-behavioural techniques or stress management programs—to align with an individual's dispositional tendencies may enhance their emotional resilience and promote more adaptive coping responses in the face of stress.

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Conflict of Interest

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