



PERSONALITY AND COPING STYLES AMONG POST-GRADUATION STUDENTS

Psychology

Sebin James	Student, Department of Studies in Psychology, Manasagangothri, University of Mysore, Mysuru.
Dr. G. Venkatesh Kumar*	Ph.D. – Professor, Department of Studies in Psychology, Manasagangothri, University of Mysore, Mysuru *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Personality is defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics of an individual that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviors in various situations. Coping is often defined as efforts to prevent or diminish threat, harm and loss, or to reduce associated distress. Personality make-up of the students seems to impact their approach to coping with pressure. The aim of this study was to understand the relationship between personality and coping styles of boys and girls studying at post-graduation level. The sample consists of 120 post-graduation students (60 female, 60 male) from different colleges in Mysore. The participants were asked to complete the Type A Type B Behavioral Pattern Scale and Cope Inventory. The results of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between Type B personality and problem focused coping style and female uses less useful coping style more than men.

KEYWORDS

Personality type, Coping styles, Stress, Post-graduation students.

INTRODUCTION

Attending college and embarking upon an academic career is a pleasurable and exciting experience for many of the students. However, for others, the transition to college and pursuing an academic career is far more stressful than exciting. College students are going through a transition period filled with many challenges in life due to various changes and choices that they have to make in order to get academic qualification (Hystad, Eid, Laberg et.al, 2009, Bojuwoye, 2002). Researches have shown that stress is prevalent among students of higher learning institutions (Robotham, 2008, Pierceal & Keim, 2007). Few findings indicated that one out of three college students reported experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety or stress (Mahmoud, Staten, Hall & Lennie, 2012). It was reported that stressors such as leaving home for the first time, examinations, writing academic papers and other academic requirements are experienced as immensely stressful by many college students. The sudden transition of the use of English language as a medium of instruction can also be a source of stress for college students. These stressors can cause negative outcomes such as elevated levels of anxiety and depression, frequent incidents of illness and poor academic performance (Robotham, 2008, Murphy & Archer, 1996). In view of the various challenges faced by college students, their ability to cope effectively is crucial.

Higher education over the years has become more demanding as newer course and evaluation practices keeping getting added. The present day educational experience is causing more stress for the students. While some students succumb to the pressures and even commit suicide, others seem to thrive as a result of the addition pressures (Alginahi, Ahmed, Tayan et.al, 2009). Personality make-up of the students seems to impact their approach to coping with pressure. The aim of the study was to explore the relationship between personality and coping styles of post-graduation students.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the relationship between personality and coping styles among post-graduation students.
2. To study the gender differences of post-graduation students in their personality and coping styles.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no relationship between personality and coping styles among post-graduation students.
2. There is no gender differences in personality and coping styles among post-graduation students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample consists of 120 post-graduation students, studying in different colleges of Mysore region and were selected through a convenient sampling technique. The participants were divided into

two groups based on gender (N= 120, Male = 60 & Female = 60).

Instruments

Type A Type B Behavioral Pattern Scale (ABBPS) by Upinder Dhair and Manisha Jain (2001)

Type A Type B Behavior Pattern Scale is used to assess the personality type of an individual under the subscales tenseness, impatience, restlessness, achievement orientation, domineering and workaholic as Type A, and complacent, easy going, nonassertive, relaxed and patience as Type B. The test consists of 17 statements in form-A and 16 statements in form-B standardized by Upinder Dhair and Manisha Jain in the year 2001. The Type A Type B Behavior Pattern Scale is a 5 point scale. Responses were given under 5 categories; Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 scores were given to each response respectively for both the forms. The form-A assess Type A and form-B assess Type B personality characteristics. The reliability coefficient of form-A and form-B is 0.54. The validity of the test is 0.73 for both the forms separately.

Cope Inventory (Dispositional Version) by Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., and Weintraub, J. K (1989)

COPE Inventory is used to assess the coping styles used by an individual. It was developed by Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., and Weintraub, J. K in the year 1989. The inventory consists of 60 statements which assess the three different coping styles (problem focused coping, emotion focused coping and less useful coping) of the participant. The COPE Inventory (Dispositional Version) is a 4 point scale. Responses were given under 4 categories; I usually don't do this at all, I usually do this a little bit, I usually do this a medium amount and I usually do this a lot. 1, 2, 3, 4 scores were given to each response respectively. The statement number 4, 5, 10, 14, 15, 19, 22, 25, 30, 32, 33, 39, 41, 42, 45, 47, 49, 55, 56 and 58 are related to problem focused coping (PFC). The statement number 1,3,7,8, 13, 17, 18, 20, 21, 28, 29, 36, 38, 44, 46, 48, 50, 54, 59 and 60 are related to emotion focused coping (EFC). The statement number 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 16, 23, 24, 26, 27, 31, 34, 35, 37, 40, 43, 51, 52, 53 and 57 are related to less useful coping (LUC). The reliability of the inventory obtained by alpha composite reliability score is 0.93. The test has a high validity.

PROCEDURE

A good rapport was established with each participant, consent of each participant was taken and they were asked to fill up the socio demographic data sheet. The Type A Type B Behavior Pattern Scale (ABBPS) was administered on the participant. Instructions were given to the participant and it was made sure that he/she understood the instructions clearly. After a rest pause of five minutes; COPE Inventory (Dispositional Version) was administered on the participant. Instructions were given to the participant and it was made sure that he/she understood the instructions clearly. After the completion of the tests, the answer sheets were collected back from the participant. Using

the scoring key and norms, the scoring has been done. Scores were analyzed by applying appropriate statistical techniques such as Pearson product moment correlation test to determine the relationship between personality and coping styles and Independent sample t test to measure the gender differences in personality and coping styles.

RESULTS

Table 1: Correlation between Type A personality and coping styles.

Mean, standard deviation and correlation value between Type A personality and coping styles.

Personality Type	Coping Styles	Mean	Sd	r value	sig.
Type A Personality	PFC	53.83	7.10	0.042	0.646
	EFC	51.36	6.62	0.121	0.187
	LUC	45.41	7.20	0.118	0.198

As shown in table 1, the obtained 'r' value and significance for COPE subscale, problem focused coping ($r=0.42$, $p=0.646>.05$), emotional focused coping ($r=0.121$, $p=0.187>.05$), less useful coping ($r=-0.118$, $p=0.198>.05$) suggests that there is no significant relationship between Type A personality and coping styles.

Table 2: Correlation between Type B personality and coping styles.

Mean, standard deviation and correlation value between Type B personality and coping styles.

Personality Type	Coping Styles	Mean	sd	r value	sig.
Type B Personality	PFC	53.83	7.10	0.180	0.049
	EFC	51.36	6.62	0.115	0.212
	LUC	45.41	7.20	0.145	0.115

As shown in table 2, the obtained 'r' value and significance for COPE subscale, problem focused coping ($r=0.180$, $p=0.049<.05$), emotional focused coping ($r=0.115$, $p=0.212>.05$), less useful coping ($r=-0.145$, $p=0.115>.05$) suggests that there is a significant relationship between Type B personality and problem focused coping style.

Table 3: Gender differences in Type A and Type B personality.

Mean, standard deviation and t-value for the gender differences in Type A and Type B personality.

Personality Type	Gender	N	Mean	sd	df	t value	sig.
Type A Personality	Male	60	53.66	8.51	118	.817	.416
	Female	60	54.83	7.06	118		
Type B Personality	Male	60	55.11	6.24	118	.235	.814
	Female	60	5.38	6.17	118		

As shown in table 3, the mean and standard deviation of female on Type A personality is 54.83 and 7.06 respectively. The mean and standard deviation for male Type A personality is 53.66 and 8.51 respectively. The corresponding t-value indicate that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of Type A personality ($t=0.817$, $p=0.416>.05$). Hence, the result of the test suggests that there is no significant gender differences on Type A personality score. However, comparably the mean value of female is more than male. Hence, it can be said that female have slightly more Type A personality than male.

The mean and standard deviation of female on Type B personality is 55.38 and 6.17 respectively. The mean and standard deviation for male Type B personality is 55.11 and 6.24 respectively. The corresponding t-value indicate that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of Type B personality ($t=0.235$, $p=0.814>.05$). Hence, the result of the test suggests that there is no significant gender differences on Type B personality score. The mean value of both female and male is more or less the same.

Table 4: Gender differences in coping styles.

Mean, standard deviation and t-value for the gender differences in coping styles.

Personality Type	Gender	N	Mean	sd	df	t value	sig.
PFC	Male	60	53.21	7.67	118	.95	.344
	Female	60	54.45	6.49			
EFC	Male	60	51.05	6.58	118	.552	.603
	Female	60	51.68	6.71			
LUC	Male	60	44	6.24	118	2.187	.031
	Female	60	46.83	7.85			

As shown in table 4, the mean and standard deviation of female on

problem focused coping is 54.45 and 6.49 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of male on problem focused coping is 53.21 and 7.67 respectively. The corresponding t-value indicate that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of problem focused coping style ($t=0.95$, $p=0.344>.05$). Hence, the result of the test suggests that there is no gender differences on problem focused coping style score.

The mean and standard deviation of female on emotion focused coping is 51.68 and 6.71 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of male on emotion focused coping is 51.05 and 6.58 respectively. The corresponding t-value indicate that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of emotion focused coping style ($t=0.522$, $p=0.603>.05$). Hence, the result of the test suggests that there is no gender differences on emotion focused coping style score.

The mean and standard deviation of female on less useful coping is 46.83 and 7.85 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of male on less useful coping is 44.00 and 6.24 respectively. The corresponding t-value indicate that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of less useful coping style ($t=2.187$, $p=0.031<.05$). Hence, the result of the test suggests that there is gender differences in less useful coping style score. The mean value of female is more than male. Hence, it can be said that female uses less useful coping style more than male.

DISCUSSION

The present study aims to study the relationship between personality and coping styles among post-graduation students. From table 1 and table 2, we can infer that there is no significant relationship between personality and coping styles except for Type B personality and problem focused coping style. Hence, the hypothesis is partially accepted. There is a significant relationship between Type B personality and problem focused coping style among post-graduation students.

Type B personality, by definition, are noted to live at lower stress levels. Individuals with Type B personality typically work steadily and may enjoy achievement, although they have a greater tendency to disregard physical or mental stress when they do not achieve. When Type B personality individuals are faced with competition, they may focus less on winning and more on enjoying the game regardless of winning or losing. Problem-focused coping involves altering or managing the problem that is causing the stress and is highly action focused. People who engage in problem-focused coping focus their attention on gathering the required resources (i.e. skills, tools and knowledge) which is necessary to deal the stressor. This process involves a number of strategies such as gathering information, resolving conflict, planning and making decisions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The gender differences in personality and coping styles were tested by applying proper statistical technique. From table 3 and table 4, we can infer that there is no gender differences in personality and coping styles except for less useful coping style. Hence, the hypothesis is partially accepted. There is gender differences in using less useful coping style among post-graduation students. From the mean value we can see that female uses less useful coping style more than male. Recent studies revealed that there are small differences between male and female coping strategies when studying individuals in similar situations.

Here, the results indicates that gender differences in using the less useful coping style to a stressor. The way one react to a stressor is different from person to person. A male and female can react to a stressful situation in the same way or different. It is possible. From the mean value we can see that there is not much difference between male and female score. Less useful coping can be described as cognitive and behavioral efforts directed towards minimizing, denying or ignoring dealing with a stressful situation. Less useful coping is focused on ignoring a stressor and is therefore passive, whereas emotion-focused coping is active (Admiraal et al., 2000, Holahan et al., 2005).

Coping is a dynamic process that fluctuates over time in response to changing demands and appraisals of the situation (Moos & Holahan, 2003). The way an individual copes is influenced by his or her resources which include both health and energy (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), social support, material resources and existential beliefs, such as belief in God (Kim & Duda, 2003). An alternative explanation for

this difference involves genetic factors. The degree to which genetic factors and social conditioning influences coping, is the subject of ongoing debate.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the present study, it is found that there is a significant relationship between Type B personality and problem focused coping style among post-graduation students. The results also indicates that there is a significant gender differences in less useful coping style among post-graduation students. Among the participants female uses less useful coping style more than male. However, there is no other significant gender differences in problem focused coping, emotion focused coping and personality.

REFERENCES

- Admiraal, W. F., Korhagen, F. A. J., & Wubbels, T. (2000). Effects of student teachers' coping behaviour. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70(1), 33-52.
- Alginahi, Y. M., Ahmed, M., Tayan, O., Siddiqi, A. A., Sharif, L., Alharby, A., & Nour, R. (2009). ICT students, stress and coping strategies: English perspective as a case study of midsize Middle Eastern University. *Trends in Information Management*, 5(2), 111 – 140.
- Allport, G. W. (1937). *Personality: A psychological interpretation*. Sydney, Australia; Holt, Rinehart and Wiston
- Bojuwoye, O. (2002). Stressful experiences of first year students of selected universities in South Africa. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 15(3), 270 – 290.
- Brougham, R. R., Zail, C. M., Mendoza, C. M., & Miller, J. R. (2009). Stress, sex differences and coping strategies among college students. *Current Psychology*, 28, 85 – 97.
- Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 267 – 283.
- Cattell, R. B. (1965). *The scientific analysis of personality*. Baltimore: Penguin books
- Carver, C. S. & Scheier, M. F. (2000). *Perspectives on Personality* (4th edition) Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster
- Fokman, S., & Lazarus, R. S. (1985). If it changes it must be a process: study of emotion and coping during three stages of a college examination. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 48, 150 – 170.
- Holahan, C. J., Holahan, C. K., Moos, R. H., Brennan, P. L., & Schutte, K. K. (2005). Stress Generation, Avoidance Coping, and Depressive Symptoms: A 10-Year Model. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73(4), 658-666.
- Hudd, S. S., Dumlaio, J., Erdmann-Sager, D., Murray, D., Phan, E., Soukas, N., et al. (2000). Stress at college: Effects on health-habits, health status and self-esteem. *College Student Journal*, 34(2), 217-227.
- Hystad, S. W., Eid, J., Laberg, J. C., Johnsen, B. H., & Bartone, P. T. (2009). Academic stress and health: Exploring the moderating role of personality hardiness. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 53, 421-429.
- Karimzade, A., & Besharat, M. A. (2011). An investigation of the relationship between personality dimensions and stress coping styles. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 30, 797 – 802.
- Kim, M. S., & Dauda, J. L. (2003). The coping process; cognitive appraisals of stress Coping strategies and coping effectiveness. *The Sport Psychologist*, 17, 406-425.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Litman, J. A. (2006). The COPE inventory: Dimensionality and relationships with approach- and avoidance-motives and positive and negative traits. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 41, 273 – 284.
- Mahmoud, J. S. R., Staten, R. T., Hall, L. A., & Lennie, T. A. (2012). The relationship among young adult college students' depression, anxiety, stress, demographics, life satisfaction, and coping styles. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 33, 149 – 156.
- Moos, R., & Holahan, C. (2003). Dispositional and contextual perspectives on coping: Toward an integrative framework. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 52(12), 1387-1404.
- Murphy, M. C., & Archer, J. A. (1996). Stressors on the college campus: A comparison of 1985 and 1993. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37, 20-28.
- Pierceall, E. A., & Keim, M. C. (2007). Stress and coping strategies among community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 31(9), 703 – 712.
- Robotham, D. (2008). Stress among higher education students: Towards a research agenda. *Higher Education*, 56, 735 – 746.
- Struthers, C. W., Perry, R. P., & Menec, V. H. (2000). An examination of the relationship among academic stress, coping, motivation, and performance in college. *Research in Higher Education*, 41, 581-592.
- Vollrath, M., & Torgersen, S. (2000). Personality types and coping. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 29(2), 367 – 378.
- Wang, W., & Miao, D. (2009). The relationships among coping styles, personality traits and mental health of Chinese medical students. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 37(2), 163 – 172.