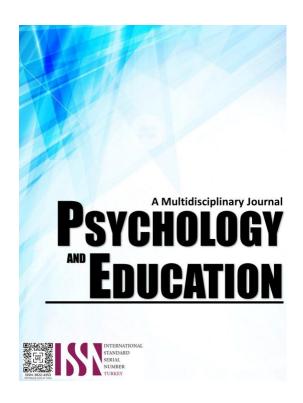
# COPING STYLES AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERSONALITY TRAITS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS



# PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

2023 Volume: 10 Pages: 950-955

Document ID: 2023PEMJ916 DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8159162 Manuscript Accepted: 2023-15-7



# **Coping Styles and Its Relationship to the Personality Traits of College Students**

Axle Nicandro\*, Lara Alliah Cabales, Jhon Joshua Del Rosario, Jahna Dela Cruz, Benjamin Clidoro, Angela Bilan, Jhoselle Tus For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

#### **Abstract**

This study investigates the relationship between personality traits and coping styles among college students in private higher educational institution. Hence, employing correlational design to assess the relationship between coping styles and personality of 150 college students. The statistical analysis reveals that the r coefficient of 0.54 indicates a moderate positive correlation between the variables. The p-value of 0.00, which is less than 0.05, leads to the decision to reject the null hypothesis. Hence, a significant relationship exists between coping style and personality traits among fourth-year college students in a private state university.

**Keywords:** coping styles, personality traits, college students, correlational study, Philippines

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic affected about 24.9 million students in the remaining weeks of the 2019-2020 school year, causing the Philippines' educational system to cease operations (de Guzman, 2021). Despite this, the system had to continue because Leonor Briones, Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd), declared that education must continue. The department offered a solution to use different learning options, including online learning, self-learning materials, and flexible learning, with the goal of delivering quality education despite physical constraints. However, this method is unsuitable for everyone due to the Philippines' low internet access. For instance, according to De Guzman (2021), many pupils and teachers struggled due to social inequality and a lack of resources. In addition, as reported by Joaquin et al. (2020) stated that 74% of public schools and 45% of Filipinos lack internet connection.

Furthermore, coping styles are the psychologicalbehavioral modifications brought about by controlling a person's unique personality traits and external sources of stress. Problem-focused coping, emotionfocused coping, and avoidance coping are the three distinct types of coping styles that researchers have proposed. An active approach to problem-solving or lessening the problem's adverse consequences is used in problem-focused coping, which aims to change stressful situations by using emotional reactions like anger, self-preoccupation, or self-blame, emotionfocused coping attempts to lessen the impact of stressors. Coping strategies impact psychological issues. Avoidance coping involves avoiding stressful situations through interpersonal interference or retreating from the circumstance rather than assertively approaching and dealing with it (Wu et al., 2020).

Positive and negative coping are the two main categories of coping methods. Coping includes strategies of cognition and behavior that people can use to control, lessen, or resist stressful situations' internal or external demands. Negative coping strategies include avoidance, social isolation, and self-pitying, all increasing anxiety. Good coping strategies entail handling difficulties, responding swiftly to stresses, and reducing pressure (Zhao et al.,2021).

Meanwhile, conscientiousness, openness, extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness are the five traits McCrae and Costa proposed to explain personality; each person also exhibits distinctive patterns that may predict other traits (Feist et al., 2018). In this situation, examining personality qualities may aid in understanding further traits of students, like coping mechanisms (Algorani & Gupta, 2022).

In the previous studies of Agbaria et al. (2022), they stated that since openness includes curiosity about the inner and outer worlds, people who score highly on the openness scale are more adaptable and creative than others. Accordingly, openness was discovered to be correlated to problem-focused coping and negatively related to emotion-focused coping. These results are consistent with earlier research demonstrating the significance of openness for adaptive coping (Chai & Low, 2015; Penley & Tomaka, 2002). Also, those with high Openness scores have more comfortable emotional experiences because they are better ready to accept their own and other people's feelings. This shows that these people can flexibly deal with stress by employing a variety of coping mechanisms to reduce the negative consequences of the stressor and/or the suffering felt (Roesch et al. 2006). As a

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result, these people frequently adopt problem-focused coping instead of emotion-focused coping (Leandro & Castillo 2010; Suls et al. 1998; Rahmat et al. 2022).

Moreover, it was discovered that extraversion was positively correlated with problem-focused coping and negatively correlated with emotion-focused coping, which is in line with other research emphasizing the significance of extraversion for coping skills (Karimzade & Besharat 2011; Roesch et al. 2006; Wang & Miao 2009; Zainah et al. 2019). These results can be explained by considering how people with high extraversion scores are frequently drawn to excitement and optimism. When confronted with a stressful situation or event, these people use coping mechanisms that promote their interpersonal relationships. Previous studies have shown that people with high extraversion scores engage in active coping mechanisms and constructive self-evaluation.

In addition, it was discovered that agreeableness was positively associated with problem-focused coping and negatively associated with emotion-focused coping, which is consistent with research that indicates the significance of agreeableness for coping skills (Fickova, 2009; Leandro & Castillo, 2010). The idea that people with high agreeableness scores choose benevolence, ego, trust, and usefulness can be considered one explanation for this. So, these people employ healthy emotion-focused coping mechanisms like self-blame and avoidance to a much greater extent than they do positive reappraisal techniques, social support, and cautious preparation (Fickova, 2009; Leandro and Castillo, 2010).

Further, it was discovered that conscientiousness was favorably associated with problem-focused coping and adversely associated with emotion-focused coping, which is consistent with earlier research emphasizing the value of conscientiousness for coping skills (Karimzade and Besharat, 2011; Leandro and Castillo, 2010; Roesch et al., 2006). Such results can be explained by the idea that people with high conscientiousness scores tend to be cautious planners and sensible decision-makers, especially under stress (Chartrand et al., 1993; Hooker et al., 1994; Vollrath et al., 1994).

Conversely, someone with high neuroticism tends to encounter emotional imbalances more frequently. Contrary to the results above, neuroticism was shown to be favorably connected to emotion-focused coping and negatively related to problem-focused coping, which is in line with earlier research showing a positive correlation between neuroticism and

maladaptive coping mechanisms (Carlo et al., 2012; Chwaszcz et al. 2018; Roesch et al. 2006; Zainah et al. 2019). This can be explained by the idea that people with high levels of neuroticism are more prone to psychological anguish, irrational thinking, and trouble controlling their emotions (Costa and McCrae, 1992). As a result, several researchers have discovered a strong connection between neuroticism and unhelpful and passive coping mechanisms like self-blame, fantasy, and denial (Hengartner et al., 2017; Eksi, 2010; Wang & Miao, 2009).

Moreover, this study aims to determine the relationship between personality traits and coping styles among college students. This study can contribute to expanding knowledge about coping styles and personality traits. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following question:

1.Is there a significant relationship between coping style and personality traits among college students?

## **Literature Review**

COVID-19 prompted global quarantine procedures. Quarantine's social isolation might cause psychological discomfort, according to previous epidemics (Brooks et al., 2020). Social isolation may affect mental health, but not everyone. Personal traits and coping skills may reduce the mental health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Chew et al., 2020). Thus, this study investigated how dysfunctional personality traits and coping methods affected psychological suffering during the Italian national lockdown in the spring of 2020. Although personality and coping have been studied extensively, few studies have examined how personality influences psychological suffering during a pandemic (Mazza et al., 2020). Such studies are important because they can help us understand how people differ in real-world scenarios like the COVID-19 pandemic and target treatment or preventative efforts at those at risk for negative effects. The current Italian COVID-19 confinement mental health study found that maladaptive personality traits increase psychological discomfort. The route model's negative effect explained twice as much psychological discomfort as the other maladaptive features. All maladaptive qualities were negatively connected with acceptance and constructive reframing and positively associated with avoidant coping (drug use, denial, etc.). As path studies showed, coping techniques also explained psychological pain.

In parallel with a growing interest in some of the

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psychological consequences of the pandemic for university students (e.g., on students' expectations and experiences, Aucejo et al., 2020); on adjustment to online courses (Audet et al., 2021); on e-learning achievement emotions, Raccanello et al., 2022), researchers are paying more attention to university students' personality traits that may have contributed to diminishing their academic performance. In line with this tendency, we examined whether the Big Five traits—Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Open-Mindedness, and Negative Emotionality or Neuroticism-acted as risk or protective factors after a disaster like the COVID-19 pandemic for a sample of Italian university students, taking into account a wide range of coping strategies. Acknowledging the strengths and constraints of the HEXACO model, we nevertheless decided to focus on a model including the five main factors comprised by the most known models (i.e., the Big Five model), both for parsimony and for the need to rapidly assess personality traits, given the sudden and unpredictable outbreak of the pandemic (it is worth noting that the time interval between the declaration of the pandemic and the date in which we presented the project for thi

Nurses' and nursing students' COVID-19 emotional responses and coping techniques Women showed greater fear and anxiety than men. Rural people were more gloomy, but urban participants were more frightened and anxious. COVID-19 closeness increases anxiety and wrath. Nurses are more emotional and use problem-focused coping than nursing students. "The more fear, the more problem-focused coping" may be a cycle. People may also remark, "The more angry, the more emotion-focused coping," or "The more problem-focused coping, the more anxious, the more angry, the more sadness."

# Methodology

This study employed a correlational design to determine if there is a significant relationship between coping styles and personality traits among 150 fourth-year college students in a private higher educational institution. Thus, the study employed a purposive sampling technique to select respondents based on the set criteria of the study. The instrument used in this investigation to obtain specific data is the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) by Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swan (2003) with .77 Cronbach's alpha (Ziegler et al., 2014) and Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced Inventory (Brief-COPE) by Carver (1997) with .90 Cronbach's alpha (Garcia, 2018). Hence, ethical considerations were observed, and the

Pearson r correlation coefficient was employed to attain the study's objective.

## **Results and Discussion**

This study assessed the relationship between coping style and personality traits among fourth-year college students. Specifically, it sought to test the following claim:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between coping style and personality traits among fourth-year college students.

The relationship between coping style and personality traits among fourth-year college students is shown in Table 1. The r coefficient of 0.54 indicates a moderate positive correlation between the variables. The p-value of 0.00, which is less than 0.05, leads to the decision to reject the null hypothesis. Hence, a significant relationship exists between coping style and personality traits among fourth-year college students in a private state university. Moreso, these findings were supported by the study of Rahmat et al. (2022), that there is an existing relationship between coping style and personality traits.

Table 1. Test of Significant Relationship of Coping Styles and Personality Traits

Variables	r	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Coping Style and Personality Traits	0.54	0.00	Reject H0	Significant

## Conclusion

Within the scope of this study, the association between personality traits and coping methods was investigated among students in their fourth year of college in a private school. According to the statistical analysis of the study, there is a connection between the ways of coping and the personality qualities that people possess. This suggests that having a healthy balance of different coping strategies and personality traits might lead to excellent outcomes in terms of one's well-being. As a result, it is strongly urged that schools provide activities that will assist students in having a healthy coping mechanism and strong personality qualities that will prepare them when they enter their respective industries in the near future. This is because these activities will prepare students for the challenges

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they will face when they enter their respective industries.

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## **Affiliations and Corresponding Information**

## Axle Nicandro

Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation, Inc. -Philippines

#### Lara Alliah Cabales

Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation, Inc. -Philippines

#### Jhon Joshua Del Rosario

Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation, Inc. -Philippines

#### Jahna Dela Cruz

Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation, Inc. -Philippines

#### Benjamin Clidoro

Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation, Inc. -Philippines

#### Angela Bilan

Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation, Inc. -Philippines

#### Jhoselle Tus

Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation, Inc. -Philippines

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