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Personality, Coping Strategies and Youth Problems in Engineering Students

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Abstract.

The major aim of the present study was to assess "Personality, Coping Strategies and Youth Problems in Engineering Students." A sample of 80 engineering hostellers from Manipal University Jaipur, aged between 18-21 years were selected using the purposive technique of sampling. Big Five Inventory BFI [9] , Coping Strategies Inventory CSI [28], and Youth Problem Inventory YPI [17] were used to assess the variables in the study. The obtained data were analyzed using the statistical technique of Pearson Correlation. The findings revealed that a significant relationship exists between personality and coping strategies. But each personality dimension does not have a significant relationship with each of the youth problems (family, personal, educational, and socio-emotional). Also, no significant relationship has been found between coping strategies and youth problems. However, a significantly negative relationship has been found between problem-focused engagement and personal problems.

Keywords: personality, coping strategies, youth problems, engineering students

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1. Introduction

Youth is the period between childhood and adulthood. This is the stage when the individual is most energetic and ready to start the new phase of life that is adulthood. The past childhood carefreeness is gone and one becomes mature enough to deal with demanding situations and the society. According to WHO, youth is the age group of 15 to 24 years.

Youth Problems are on the rise. They include family problems, educational problems, socio-emotional problems and personal problems.

Family Problems include separation and conflict among parents, conflict among siblings and conflict between the individual and the parents. This makes one insecure and affects various domains of life like academic performance, relationship with peers and also causes stress. Family Problems can affect mental health. It can cause anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances and substance abuse.

Educational problems are also increasing. Following a fixed time table, being on time and attending classes is a major stressor for college students. Time management is an effective way to cope with challenges faced in college. Submitting assignments on time and preparing projects are tasks which are difficult for many students. Attending lectures and understanding them is tiring as well as causes stress. Preparing for the exams and following a fixed schedule is also monotonous. The best way to achieve this is be regular and include hobbies.

Socio-emotional problems are also an area of concern. They cause stress which harms the mental health. Substance abuse, increasing crime rate among youth, family problems and mental health issues like anxiety, depression are a cause and also the result of emotional problems. Increased alcohol consumption, smoking and other substances is an immediate call for action. Establishing identity in the crowd, studying far away from home and increasing competition is also a big stressor.

Personal Problems are also on the rise. They include the relationship issues with peers and family. They also include adjustment with the environment and interaction with others. Issues like dealing with the stressors and societal demands fall in the realm of personal problems. When not dealt with, they cause anxiety, depression, irritation and sleep disturbances. Not having a proper diet is also a response to unsolved personal problems.

Nearly 10-30 per cent of young people in India suffer from health issues which impacts their behaviours. 20 per cent of young people experience some form of mental illness - such as depression, mood disturbances, substance abuse, suicidal behaviours, eating disorders, etc [27].

Coping Strategies are the behavioural and psychological efforts, that people use to tolerate, reduce, or minimize stress. For instance, problem-solving, cognitive-restructuring, social-support, express-emotions, problem-avoidance, wishful thinking, social-withdrawal and self-criticism. Coping is needed to deal with various stressors. If the stress is not dealt with, the individuals tend to become depressed, anxious, irritable and start using harmful substances which causes further physical and psychological problems. Coping is needed to deal with all kinds of emotional and environmental problems. It is employed to deal with family problems, peer conflicts and academic issues.

The coping strategies generally employed are problem-focused (It is resolving the stressful situation or event itself) and emotion focused (It is to manage the intensity of the negative emotions that are caused by a stressful situation).

A greater number of positive coping strategies was associated with better adjustment. Encouraging students to use a greater number of positive coping strategies can help decrease negative adjustment and promote positive adjustment [8].

Personality is the unique characteristic ways of responding to individuals and situations. It is derived from the word "persona" meaning mask. We all have hidden reasons for our actions. Robert McCrae and Paul Costa developed the Five-Factor Model according to which personality is described in terms of five broad factors namely Openness to Experience. It is the willingness to try new things. People who are high on this factor, like to explore unconventional ideas and beliefs and challenge the existing notions. They enjoy artistic and cultural activities like visiting art galleries, museums, theatres, listening to music and travelling to new places. They are more open to unfamiliar cultures and customs.

Conscientiousness- Those who are high on this factor are aware of their actions and the consequences of their behaviour. They feel a sense of responsibility towards other and are careful to carry out their duties. A survey found that participants whose parents were affectionate towards them as children were high on conscientiousness.

Extraversion- It is characterised by being outgoing and socially confident. Extraverts are talkative and come forward in social situations. They seek the attention of others. Carl Jung described extraversion in terms of psychic energy, which everyone directs differently.

Agreeableness- People who are high on agreeableness are friendly and co-operative. They are liked by their peers and colleagues and are more altruistic.

Neuroticism - People with high neuroticism factor are worriers. They anxious, overthink and exaggerate the problems. According to a study, people in relationships were less happy if their partner scored highly on this personality factor [7]

Medical science students were high on neuroticism trait and psychology honours students were high on openness to experience and extraversion [11].

2. Literature Review

Personality types and coping strategies used by undergraduate students of Kwara State University can affect the academic achievement of the students. Descriptive survey was adopted for this study [24]. The findings show that students with personality A achieved better in academics than those with personality type B. Students who used problem coping strategies achieved better in academics than those who used emotional coping strategies. The interaction of personality traits and coping styles in relation to stress [1] .

4628 individuals were selected over 20 years by random sampling from non-academic employees working in 50 different centres at Isfahan province. It was found that some personality traits are linked with passive copings and cause high-stress. It was found that improved effective coping strategies in people with maladaptive traits is a crucial component of prevention and control programs of stress.

The relationship between the big five, coping styles and subjective well- being on a Turkish sample of 251 undergraduate students. It was found that neuroticism was a negative predictor of subjective well-being while extraversion and conscientiousness were positive predictors. Self-confident coping style positively predicted subjective well-being but helpless coping style negatively predicted subjective well-being [15].

Educational stress and use of stress coping strategies in 1400 school going adolescents. The result was that the adolescents facing educational stress is affected by age, gender, socioeconomic status, examinations, parental expectation and peers. They use different coping strategies to deal [12].

The relationship between personality dimensions and coping styles to deal with stress on a sample of 300 students (150 girls, 150 boys) from Malayer University [10]. The outcome was that there was negative correlation between Neuroticism and positive emotional-focused coping style and positive correlation between neuroticism and negative emotional-focused coping style in female students, but there was positive correlation between neuroticism and negative emotional-focused coping styles in male students. There was positive correlation between Extraversion and problem-focused coping style and positive emotional-focused coping style in male and female students. Openness and problem- focused coping styles were positively correlated in female students. Agreeableness dimension showed positive correlation with problem-focused and positive emotional- focused coping styles and negative correlation with negative emotional-focused coping style in males, but it showed positive correlation with problem- focused coping style and negative correlation with negative emotional-focused coping style in female students. Conscientiousness and problem-focused coping style were positively correlated but there was negative correlation negatively between conscientiousness and negative emotional-focused coping style in males and females. Personality and coping have independent and also interactive roles in affecting physical health and mental health [4].

Sharif et al. conducted a study on 100 suicidal 100 non-suicidal patients. The outcomes proved a significant relationship between coping, extroversion and nervousness [25]. Scores on Nervousness and extraversion could predict the coping style. Suicidal people were high on nervousness and emotion-focused coping style when compared

with the control group. 50 physicians to find the relationship between personality traits and stress coping. Task oriented coping was used as a stress coping style. Higher levels of neuroticism were positively correlated and higher extraversion levels correlated negatively while using emotion-oriented coping for stress [13].

Roohafza et al. studied 4763 people [22]. The results show that personality traits and perceived stress are determine psychological outcomes. Social support and coping strategies reduce the increasing cumulative positive effects of neuroticism and perceived stress on the psychological outcomes. They enhance the protective effect of extraversion through decreasing the positive effect of perceived stress on the psychological outcomes. Phan conducted a study on 297 European American and 210 Asian American college-aged students and community members and found that it was important to integrate personality traits and coping styles in understanding the subjective and social wellbeing of Asian and European Americans [20].

Berkel studied the relationship between personality, coping styles and psychological distress among 201 students from the University of Canterbury[3]. It was found that students with high harm avoidance and low self-directedness reported increased stress, anxiety and depression. But low harm avoidance and high self-directedness was a protective factor against the development of distress. Avoidant coping was the most maladaptive coping style as it was linked with increased stress, anxiety and depression, whereas problem-focused coping reduced depressive symptoms. Strong relationship found between personality and coping styles because individuals with high reward dependence tend to use emotion-focused coping and high self-directed students use problem-focused coping. High harm avoidance was linked with avoidant coping. The result proved that personality and the coping styles influence whether we experience stress, anxiety and depression. The relationship between personality and coping styles suggests that individuals with maladaptive personalities (e.g. high harm avoidance) are prone to psychological distress as they use maladaptive coping style like avoidant coping.

Mathur and Hemlata studied youth problems and personality types using a sample of 50 boys and 50 girls with an age range of 16 to 20 years [16]. Result show no significance difference on youth problems between extroverts and introverts. Ryan (2013), investigated the coping strategies used by college students in Ireland and how these influences the level of perceived stress and life satisfaction [23]. Sample of 150 college students (male=74, female=76) was selected. The findings show that college-going students in Ireland, both male and female, above average stress levels and average life satisfaction. Female students were found to be significantly more stressed

than males who used active emotion focused coping than females. High usage of avoidant focused coping mechanisms was significantly related to high levels of stress and lower life satisfaction.

Leandro and Castilo studied different coping styles and their relation with personality dimensions along with anxiety and depression. Results suggested that neuroticism and conscientiousness are correlated with specific coping styles [14]. Those men who score low on Neuroticism, choose problem-focused coping styles like positive reinterpretation and growth more while men with higher scores choose emotion-focused coping styles like tendency to religion and denial. Those who are high on conscientiousness choose problem-focused coping styles like positive reinterpretation, growth and active coping whereas, individuals low on this dimension choose emotion-focused coping styles like behavioural indifference.

Individuals who were high on either Neuroticism, or Agreeableness, or low on Conscientiousness and used more avoidance coping faced negative

affect [21]. Those who were high on Extraversion and used more approach coping and those low on Agreeableness who used more avoidance coping faced more positive affect.

Panayiotou, Kokkinos, Kapsou found that agreeableness predicted distress through the full mediation of avoidant coping, expressing negative feelings and active-positive coping [18]. Neuroticism linked with maladaptive coping, while Conscientiousness and Extraversion with adaptive coping.

Perera, McIlveen and Oliver concluded that conscientiousness was related to primary control engagement coping and lesser related to narrow disengagement coping, and the opposite was found for neuroticism [19]

You et al. conducted a study on a sample of 234 Chinese cancer survivors in Beijing [29]. The results prove that neuroticism was associated related to negative affect explained by avoidance coping strategies. Extraversion and neuroticism were related to positive affect and the association was explained by approach coping strategies. Groeneveld studied individuals with Parkinson's disease and the results suggested that Extraversion and neuroticism were found to significantly correlate with emotion-focused coping strategies. But conscientiousness and openness to experience which were significantly related to problem-focused coping strategies [6]

3. Method

3.1. Statement of The Problem

To see the relationship among personality, coping strategies and youth problems in engineering students

3.2. Objectives of The Study

The overall objective of the study is to find the relationship among personality, coping strategies and youth problems in engineering students. The objectives are to examine the relationship between coping and personality in Engineering Students, study the influence of personality dimensions on problems of the youth, and to examine the impact of coping strategies on the youth problems between Engineering Students

3.2.1. Hypotheses of the study

H1 There is a significant relationship between personality dimensions and youth problems in engineering students.

H2 There is a significant relationship between personality dimensions and coping strategies in engineering students.

H3 There is a significant relationship between coping strategies and youth problems in engineering students.

3.3. Operational Definitions

Personality - Personality is the combination of behavior, emotions, motivation and thought patterns that define an individual. It involves the dimensions of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism which influence our ways of dealing with situations

Youth Problems -- They are the daily life personal problems, family problems, socio-emotional and educational problems which are faced by young adults. Young Adults also known as the youth fall in the age range of 15 to 24 years.

Coping Strategies - They are the specific behavioural and psychological efforts made to reduce, tolerate or eliminate a problem.

Locale Of The Study

The study was conducted within the limits of the hostel at Manipal University Jaipur. In order to collect the data investigator selected the sample of Engineering Students who were residing in the hostel

Research Design And Sample Collection

The study has shown up the positive outcome in the collection of data. Sample collection was done with the consent of the participants falling in the age group of 18 to 21 years. The investigator took a sample size of 80 students across the Engineering branches. All instructions were provided to individual students. It took 9 to 30 minutes for students to fill the questionnaires.

Criteria for selection of students:

To select the participant students, certain criteria of inclusion and exclusion were fixed by the researcher. The following criteria's were taken into consideration for sample selection-

1. 3rd year Engineering students were selected for the research study.

2. Those falling in the age group of 18 to 21 years were selected.

3. Only hostellers were selected

TABLE 1: Socio- Demographic Details of the Sample.

S.No	Variable	Males N=38 N %	Females N=42 N %
1	Age 18 19 20 21	1 2.61 4 10.52 27 71.05 6 55.26	0 0 15 35.71 23 54.71 4 9.52
2	Education (All were undergraduates)	38 100	42 100
3	Programme (Btech students)	38 100	42 100
4	Academic Year (All 3rd Year)	38 100	42 100
5	Hostellers (All were hostellers)	38 100	42 100

3.4. Tools For Data Collection

For the study battery of psychological tests measuring the different variables were administered

1. Performa- Socio-demographic details

2. Big Five Inventory (BFI)- Developed by John, Donahue, and Kentle[9]

3. Coping Strategies Inventory (CSI)-Developed by Tobin, D. L., et al. [28]

4. Youth Problem Inventory (YPI)- Developed by Omirin [17]

1. Performa -- Socio-demographic details includes the name of the student, age, education, academic year, hosteller/ day scholar, address, home city, home state and contacts.

2. **Big Factor Inventory - Developed** by John, Donahue, and Kentle [9], it measures the big five factors of personality. It consists of 44 items. It is based on Costa and McCrae's NEO Personality Inventory to measure three broad personality dimensions: Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Openness to experience. Scoring- There is reverse scoring for some items. Scores for all the personality dimensions are summed up.

Reliability- The coefficient alpha reliability was computed which was BFI (.83)

Validity- Convergent and Discriminant Validity was computed. Across all five factors, the mean of the convergent validity correlations was .

3. Coping Strategies Inventory- Developed by Tobin, D. L., et al. [28], it finds out how people deal with the different kinds of situations in their daily life. It consists of 32 items. Scoring- There is no reverse scoring. To calculate the secondary scales, we add the primary scale that makes up the subscale. Tertiary scale is calculated by adding up the secondary scale.

4. Youth Problem Inventory- Developed by by Omirin [17] , it measures the personal, family, socio-emotional and educational problems. It consists of 70 items. During its development, it was given to 100 adolescents and 20 experts. Items whose facility value lay between .2 and .8 were selected. Scoring- Yes answers were given 2 marks and no were given 1 mark. To covert area into percentage, the formula is (obtained score/max score in sub area) *100.

Reliability- It was computed by split half (.86) and test- retest methods (.73). For Split half method, Spearman Brown formula was used.

Validity- Cross validity was computed and critical ratio value was 1.02

3.5. Procedure For The Data Collection

Data was collected in the hostel with the consent of the participants. The researcher interacted

with the students and gave them the proper instructions. Each of the questionnaires given individually to each and every student and were requested to fill them. Time taken to complete the questionnaires by each individual was 9 to 30 minutes. Most of them responded to these tools with great enthusiasm and frankness. Once the questionnaires

were completed, they were scored as per the scoring instructions given along with the tools. The obtained data was put to following statistical analysis techniques.

3.6. Statistical Analysis

The scores were analyzed with the help of Pearson Correlation to examine the relationship between personality dimensions, coping strategies and youth problems.

4. Result and Discussion

This chapter outlines the major findings of the present study, the major purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between personality, youth problems and coping strategies in Engineering students.

The results of the study have revealed many noteworthy findings with regard to the relationship of these variables.
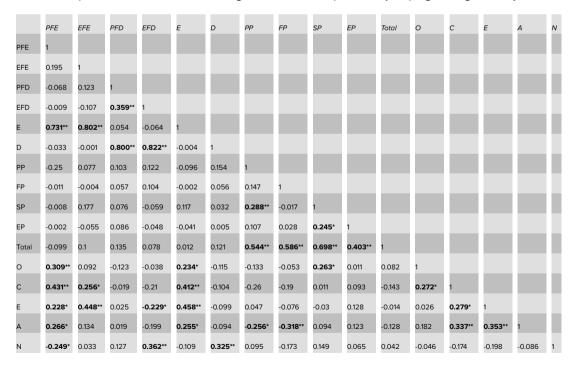
TABLE 2: presents the correlation amongst the variable of personality, coping strategies and youth.

	PFE	EFE	PFD	EFD	E	D	PP	FP	SP	EP	Total	O	C	E	A	N
PFE	1															
EFE	0.195	1														
PFD	-0.068	0.123	1													
EFD	-0.009	-0.107	0.359**	1												
E	0.731**	0.802**	0.054	-0.064	1											
D	-0.033	-0.001	0.800**	0.822**	-0.004	1										
PP	-0.25	0.077	0.103	0.122	-0.096	0.154	1									
FP	-0.011	-0.004	0.057	0.104	-0.002	0.056	0.147	1								
SP	-0.008	0.177	0.076	-0.059	0.117	0.032	0.288**	-0.017	1							
EP	-0.002	-0.055	0.086	-0.048	-0.041	0.005	0.107	0.028	0.245*	1						
Total	-0.099	0.1	0.135	0.078	0.012	0.121	0.544**	0.586**	0.698**	0.403**	1					
O	0.309**	0.092	-0.123	-0.038	0.234*	-0.115	-0.133	-0.053	0.263*	0.011	0.082	1				
C	0.431**	0.256*	-0.019	-0.21	0.412**	-0.104	-0.26	-0.19	0.011	0.093	-0.143	0.272*	1			
E	0.228*	0.448**	0.025	-0.229*	0.458**	-0.099	0.047	-0.076	-0.03	0.128	-0.014	0.026	0.279*	1		
A	0.266*	0.134	0.019	-0.199	0.255*	-0.094	-0.256*	-0.318**	0.094	0.123	-0.128	0.182	0.337**	0.353**	1	
N	-0.249*	0.033	0.127	0.362**	-0.109	0.325**	0.095	-0.173	0.149	0.065	0.042	-0.046	-0.174	-0.198	-0.086	1

problems in the sample of 80 Engineering Students. On a close examination of the table, a significant positive relationship has been found amongst various variables. Openness has shown significantly positive relationship with Problem focused engagement (r = .309, p<.01) and engagement (r =.234, p<.05). This shows that those who are

open to new things and are not rigid , focus on the problem itself. Also, they engage in solving the problem rather than disengagement.

Similarly, significantly positive relationship has been found between conscientiousness and problem focused engagement (r =.431, p<.01), conscientiousness and engagement (r = 412, p<.01) and between conscientiousness and emotion focused engagement (r =.256, p<.05).

This shows that conscientious students target the problem itself because they are responsible. Also, they engage in solving the problem because they are aware of the consequences of disengagement which is withdrawing. Since the conscientious students are perfectionists, they also target the emotion arisen due to the problem.

There is a significant positive relationship between extraversion and problem focused engagement (r =.228, p<.05), extraversion and emotion focused engagement (r =.448, p<.01) and extraversion and engagement (r = .458, p<.01) but a significant negative relationship between extraversion and emotion focused disengagement (r = -0.448, p<.01).

This shows that since extraverts are action-oriented individuals, they focus on the problem and the emotions arisen due to the problem. It is not the quality of extraverts to withdraw or disengage from the problem. So, they do not use emotion focused disengagement coping strategy.

There is a significant positive relationship between agreeableness and problem focused engagement (r =.266, p<.05) and agreeableness and engagement (r =.255, p<.05).

This indicates that since agreeable students are tactful, they focus on the problem itself and always engage in solving the problem rather than disengagement. There is a significantly negative relationship between neuroticism and problem focused engagement (r = -0.249, p<.05) but a significant positive relationship between emotion focused disengagement (r =.362, p<.01) and neuroticism and disengagement (r =.325, p<.01).

This indicates that since the students high on neuroticism are worriers, they do not focus on the problem and withdraw or disengage. So, they use emotion focused disengagement because they are anxious.

The result is supported by Souza et al. who studied thirty-five euthymic subjects with bipolar disorder and compared with 40 healthy controls [26]. The result of the study was that neuroticism influenced the use of problem-focused strategies in a negative way, and emotion-focused coping in a positive way. While conscientiousness influenced the use of problem-focused strategies.

The result is also supported by Asgari, Sadeghi and Abedini who studied the relationship between personality traits, coping style and stress on a sample of 329 students of Guilan University [2] . The results suggested that that there is a significant relationship between stress, personality traits and coping styles (emotion-based and problem-based). It was found that there was a positive and direct relationship between neuroticism and emotion-based coping style and a reverse relationship between agreeableness and emotion-based coping style, but no significant relationship with other personality traits. The result suggests a significant negative relationship between neuroticism and problem-based coping style

Therefore, in the sample population of 80 students, the personality dimensions have a significant positive relationship with the coping strategies which supports the second hypothesis.

There is a significant positive relationship between openness and socio-emotional problems (r =.263, p<.05). This is because those who are high on openness follow unconventional ideas and believes that challenge the existing notion which is opposite to the societal norms and is an obstacle to establishing good relations with others and thus, they face socio-emotional problems.

There is a significant negative relationship between conscientiousness and personal problems (r = -0.258, p<.05) This suggests that because conscientious students are aware about their behaviours and the consequences, they have lesser personal problems. Also, there is a significant negative relationship between agreeableness and personal problems (r = -0.256, p<.05) and agreeableness and family problems (r = -0.318, p<.01).

This indicates that since the agreeable students are altruistic and cooperative, they have lesser personal and family problems respectively. The results are supported by Mathur and Hemlata, who studied youth problems and personality types using a sample of 50 boys and 50 girls with an age range of 16 to 20 years [16]. Their result shows no significance difference on youth problems between extroverts and introverts. However, no significant relationship exists between the personality dimensions extraversion and neuroticism with personal, family, educational or socio-emotional problems. This shows that the results partially support the first hypothesis.

The results suggest a significant negative relationship between problem focused engagement and personal problems (r = -0.245, p<.05).This indicates that students who target on the problem itself and engage in dealing with it have lesser personal problems. There is a significant negative relationship between Problem focused engagement

and personal problems. This is because as one starts targeting the problem itself, the personal problems will eventually decrease.

However, no significant relationship exists between dimensions of coping strategies and family problems, educational or socio-emotional problems. This is because coping strategies are ways of dealing with the problems are unavoidable in spite of the ways to deal with them. These results do not support the third hypothesis.

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