
Investigating the Relationship Between Personality Traits, Coping Styles and Stress Among College Students in Singur, West Bengal ¹

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The study investigates the relationship between personality traits, coping styles and stress among college students in Singur, West-Bengal. Utilizing the Big Five Inventory to assess personality dimensions—Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism—the research aims to unravel the patterns that inform both theoretical understanding and practical applications. A sample of 255 college students participated by completing an online survey. Participants completed the General Health Questionnaire-12, the Proactive Coping Inventory, and the Big Five Inventory. Results showed significant positive correlations between personality dimensions (openness, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness) and coping styles (proactive, reflective, strategic planning, preventive coping). A Significant positive correlation was observed between extraversion and openness with instrumental support. Neuroticism was negatively correlated with proactive, reflective, strategic planning, preventive and instrumental support coping styles. Logistic regression result reveals neuroticism as a risk factor for stress whereas proactive and emotional support seeking coping style as protective factors for stress. The findings suggest that personality traits are intricately associated with coping behaviours, and both personality dimensions and coping styles work as determiners of stress emphasizing the importance of tailored psychological interventions to enhance coping mechanisms and develop adaptive coping styles.

Keywords: personality traits, coping styles, stress, college students

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Selye (1957) has defined stress as "any external event or any internal drive which threaten to upset the organism equilibrium is stress". It is an overwhelming condition or feeling experienced by a person who perceives that the demands or situations exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize. Psychological stress is believed to contribute to the initiation and maintenance of a wide range of mental and physical and emotional conditions. As the era of globalization has brought us tremendous social, economic and technological progress, but it has set forth a whole range of psychological pressures so much so that psychological stress has become a part of our everyday life. Although stress being an inevitable part of our lives still differences has been observed between individuals as to how they experience stress and deal with them which in turn affect their mental and physical conditions. In this context the role of personality traits and coping has gained tremendous importance in studying stress among individuals. Every individual goes through unique situations and psychological experiences during different stages of life which shapes their individual traits which in turn process the way they perceive, think and behave (Lyrakos, 2011). On the basis of this every individual develop novel ways of experiencing events of emotional expression and personality traits (Cherry, 2018). Overtime, these behaviours and traits develop into identities that individuals hold. Personality plays a pivotal role in the formation of individual identity. Personality shapes thought, feeling and behaviour and in turn that becomes unique to an individual (Cloninger, 2008). On the other hand, coping refers to the strategies and behaviours that individuals use to manage stress, difficult situations, or emotions. It involves both cognitive and behavioural efforts to handle internal and external demands which are recognized as taxing or exceeding a person's resources.

According to the transactional models, stress is perceived as a process and the interpretation or appraisal of stressful events is more important than the actual events (Lazarus & Launier, 1978; Cohen & Lazarus, 1983). It takes into consideration three components, the event (stressor), the person's response (signs and symptoms of stress) and interfering factors such as personality traits, where in a stressful situation

an individual is seen as an active element as to how he uses his faculties that affect the strategies of coping with stressors (Folkman, 2013). The transactional model puts forward a psychological framework that explains how individuals perceive and respond to stressors in their environment. This model posits that stress arises not merely from external events but from the interactions between individuals and their surroundings. Central to the model is the process of appraisal, where individuals evaluate whether a situation is a threat or a challenge based on their available resources. Primary appraisal involves determining if an event is harmful, while secondary appraisal assesses one's ability to cope with the perceived threat. Drawing inferences from the transactional model it can be said that how an individual will perceive a particular situation depends how he perceives the situation and also on the coping strategies he uses. As individual differences exist in using specific coping strategies by individuals, it is seen that they are a result of individual's personality traits. Coping strategies are classified into two main types: problem-focused coping, which seeks to address the stressor directly, and emotion-focused coping, which aims to alleviate distress. The model recognizes that coping responses may evolve over time as individuals reappraise their situations, highlighting the dynamic nature of stress management. Ultimately, the transactional model illustrates how cognitive evaluations shape emotional responses and influence behaviour.

Researches have documented the contribution of personality traits in predicting stress level (Akter, Sultana & Akter, 2020; Chai & Low 2015; Liong & Yeoh 2011) and certain maladaptive personality traits (e.g., neuroticism) have frequently been linked with stressful life events which in turn makes them vulnerable to experience negative emotions (Akter, Sultana & Akter 2020). Whereas individuals possessing adaptive personality traits were relatively less influenced by stress (Nicandro et al., 2023). Also, the association between personality dimensions and coping strategies is a long-standing area under investigation (O'Brien & DeLongis 1996; Holahan et al., 2005; Penley & Tomaka, 2002; Watson & Hubbard, 1996; Lee-Baggley, Preece & DeLongis, 2005; Connor-Smith & Flaschbart, 2007). Researches have well asserted that personality

traits predict coping style (Karimzade & Besharat 2011) and also affect the way we adopt coping styles (John & Srivastava 1999). Coping is thus an active process resulting as a response to demands made by the situation and how we evaluate them. Coping strategies are most predominantly classified as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidant coping. Problem-focused coping is defined as an adaptive, proactive strategy employed to manage stress by addressing it directly or altering it or by eliminating the origin of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) whereas emotion-focused coping is a technique directed at lowering emotional response (such as anxiety, fear etc) connected with the stressor (Admiraal, Korthagen, Wubbels, 2000; Folkman & Lazarus 1980). Not all strategies of emotion-focused coping are maladaptive, adaptive forms are like seeking support and accepting responsibility (David & Suls 1999; O'Brien & DeLongis, 1996). Third most predominant coping style is avoidant coping which is referred to as changing one's behaviour as an effort to minimize, deny, ignore or evade stressful events (Holahan, 2005).

There is a dearth of studies depicting significant association of adaptive personality traits with active coping styles (Penley & Tomaka, 2002; Connor-Smith & Flaschbart, 2007) and association of maladaptive personality traits with avoidance coping (Penley & Tomaka, 2002) with some studies showing some inconsistencies among these findings where significant relation between some of the personality traits and coping strategies has not been depicted (Hooker, Frazier, Monahan, 1994; David & Suls, 1999; O'Brien & DeLongis, 1996). Furthermore, there is scarcity of studies done in Indian context specially with respect with college students which pictures a transition stage. Transitioning to college presents a myriad of challenges for individuals, from academic demands to social integration, necessitating effective coping strategies to maintain well-being. So, in this study an attempt has been made to explore the relationship between personality dimensions, coping styles and stress among college students in Singur region of West Bengal.

Defining the variables

Personality

Personality is generally defined as a unique and relatively stable set of characteristics, traits, and patterns of behaviour and thought that define an individual's distinctive way of interacting with the world. It includes aspects such as temperament, attitudes, values, ideals and habits, and is shaped by both genetic and environmental factors. Personality ascertains how a person responds to various situations and the way they relate to others.

Coping style

Coping typically involves two components, appraisal and coping (Lazarus, 1966). Appraisal involves perceiving a stressor and then analysing one's ability to deal with the stressor.

Stress

Stress is the body's natural physical, mental, or emotional reaction to changes, challenges, or perceived threats. It is a systemic response triggered by a stimulus (stressor) that alters homeostasis, often causing the release of hormones that produce a "fight-or-flight" response, such as increased heart rate and muscle tension. Stress, defined as a state of apprehension or anxiety caused by a challenging situation. Stress is a natural human response prompting individuals to address challenges and threats in our lives.

Objective of the study

The study aims to investigate the relationship between personality traits, coping styles as well as to explore the factors (personality dimensions and coping styles) that predict stress among college students. In addition, the study also analyses gender differences in coping styles. By exploring these variables, we aim to offer insights that can acquaint our theoretical understanding and practical applications. Ultimately, our goal is to contribute to a deeper comprehension of how inherent personality characteristics influence coping behaviours, and in what ways these factors are related to stress

thereby aiding in the evolution of effective strategies to support students in navigating the complexities of college life.

The specific research questions were

- (1) To explore the association between personality traits and coping styles among college students.
- (2) What are the significant predictors of stress (personality dimensions and coping styles) for college students?
- (3) To explore if there is exists any difference among males and females regarding coping styles.

Methodology

Participants and procedure

Cross-sectional study was carried out from March 2023 to July 2023. As data collection was done in online mode convenience sampling method was followed keeping in mind the limitations that this sampling method brings along with it. Data was collected through questionnaire. Participants consisted of (255) college students (male = 153; female = 102) selected from different colleges in Singur, West Bengal. Assurance was provided to the participants about maintaining the confidentiality of the information. The participants were well informed before-hand about the purpose of the research and they had voluntarily agreed to be a part of the study thereby providing an informed consent. The participants were also told that they are free to withdraw from the study anytime if they wished to. Nearly 20-25 minutes was required for each participant to answer the questionnaire. Participants falling under the below stated criteria were only included in the study – (1) unmarried and falling between age of 18 – 21 years (mean-19.5 years), (2) staying with their biological parents. Whereas, participants falling under the following criteria were eliminated from the study – (1) participants living in hostel or with any relatives, (2) Participants with history of significant physical, psychological or neurological condition or with mental retardation, epilepsy or head injury (3) Participants having parents separated, divorced, staying away from home due to

occupation or have lost one of the parent, (4) Participants with previous history of abuse, neglect. These exclusion criteria were established so as to maintain homogeneity of the sample and to ensure that there were no past incidents or chronic life situations in particular that would contribute to heightened levels of stress in the participant. We had approached 282 participants, out of which 268 met all the inclusion and exclusion criteria and among that 255 of the participants had fully completed the questionnaire set.

This survey design was followed by collecting data through self-administering questionnaires.

Tools used

Data was collected by administering three different instruments along-with a socio-demographic data sheet. These are as follows:

Socio Demographic Form: Personal information included participant's name, gender, age, educational qualification, as well as information regarding educational qualification of parents and number of siblings. Participants were assured that their personal information would be handled with confidentiality and all information would be used only as research purpose.

General Health Questionnaire-12 (Goldberg G.H.Q-12) this questionnaire is widely used and validated to screen for high psychological stress and morbidity. the questionnaire was scored morbidity using bimodal scoring method (0-0-1-1). Generally, a cut of 4 is considered to categorize individuals into high stress and low stress categories based on their psychological stress on Indian population. (John et al., 2006).

A massive body of literature review have recorded the widespread usage of GHQ-12's in various populations worldwide. In a study of South African healthcare workers, the GHQ-12 showed adequate reliability and validity, along with a four-factor model suggesting multidimensionality in this group (Kufe, Bernstein and Wilson, 2023). The reliability and validity of GHQ-12 was found to be satisfactory with a three-factor structure among male tannery workers in India (Kashyap & Singh, 2017).

The Proactive Coping Inventory (PCI) (Greenglass et al. Cracow, Poland, 1999). The coping inventory was originally developed by Carver, Schwarzer, and Weintraub (1989) to measure a variety of coping responses. This scale is utilized to measure how individuals deal with stressful situation in daily life. The cope scale is a 55-item self-report measure. The coping inventory consists of seven sub-scale which are i) The proactive coping scale (14 items, (-) Reverse items) ii) Reflective coping scale (11 items) suppression of competing activities (items- 15,33, 42, 55), d) restrain coping (items- 10, 22, 41, 49) and e) seeking of instrumental Social support (items- 4,14, 30, 45); ii) emotion-focused coping: a) seeking Emotional social support (items- 11, 23. 34. 52), b) positive reinterpretation and Growth (items- 1, 29, 38, 59), c) acceptance (items- 13, 21, 44, 54), d) turning to Religion (items- 7, 18, 48, 60), and e) humor (items- 8, 20, 36, 50); and iii) Dysfunctional coping: a) focus on and venting of emotions (items- 3, 17, 28, 46), b) Denial (items - 6, 27, 40, 57), c) behavioural disengagement (items- 9, 24, 37, 51), d) mental disengagement (items- 2, 16, 31, 43), and e) alcohol/drug use (items- 12,26, 35, 53). Respondents had to choose their answers from a four-point scale 1, 2, 3 and 4. Lowest score indicates 1 and gradually highest score indicates 4. Higher score on each measure was indicating more of that component. The test-retest reliability of the scale was found ranging from .39 to .87 which is pretty close to original scale (ranging from .46 to .86).

The Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John, O. P., & Srivastava, S., 1999) this inventory was originally developed by Costa & McCrae, 1991. After that John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991 advanced 44 prototypic items moulded into short phrases measuring five dimensions of personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. This questionnaire contains 44 items, of which 8 Items for extraversion (1, 6R, 11, 16, 21R, 26, 31R, 36); 9 items for agreeableness (2R, 7, 12R, 17, 22, 27R, 32, 37R, 42); 9 items for conscientiousness (3, 8R, 13,18R, 23R, 28, 33, 38, 43R); 8 items for neuroticism (4, 9R, 14, 19, 24R,29, 34R, 39) and the remaining 10 items for openness (5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35R, 40, 41R, 44) personality ("R" denotes reverse-scored items i.e. negative items). The response Format is Likert-type like Agree strongly (5), Agree a

little (4), Neither agree nor disagree (3), Disagree a little (2) and Disagree strongly (1) for positive items. In the case of four dimensions namely Openness, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness, high score indicates positive symptoms of the personality characteristics and in case of neurotic Personality high score indicates high anxious, hostile and self-conscious. The test- retest reliability of the scale was found ranging from 0.75 to 0.90.

Data collection

Data collection was conducted through an online survey using Google Form. The form was circulated via WhatsApp among people falling in the inclusion criteria. To ensure confidentiality, no personally recognizable information/data was shared with anyone, and participants were informed that their responses would be kept anonymous. The approximate time taken to complete the questionnaire is around 15-20 minutes. 282 participants were reached out, among that 268 fitted into the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Out of 268, 255 participants had successfully completed the questionnaire set without any omissions. All the responses were tabulated and data was calculated. The research was approved by the Institutional Ethical and Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of Government General Degree College, Singur.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive analysis of the study population was performed (i.e., mean $\pm$ standard deviation for continuous variables), Pearson correlation coefficient was used to evaluate the correlation of personality traits with coping styles and binary logistic regression was used to explore which personality factors and coping styles that predict stress. t-test was conducted to test the difference between males and females with respect to coping styles.

Results

Sample Demographics

In this study, (255) undergraduate students (male = 153; female = 102) with mean age 19.5 ± 1.12 ; 153 (60%) male and 102 (40%) female; unmarried college students were examined. The descriptive results are presented in table 1 and table 2.

Descriptive Data Analysis

The mean and S.D. of the proactive coping inventory scales are presented in Table 1. Results indicate participants had the highest score in Proactive Coping (M= 39.6, SD=6.21) followed by Reflective coping (M= 32.7, SD= 6.85), Preventive coping (M=30.1, SD= 6.57) and least score in Strategic planning (M= 11.7, SD= 2.80) followed by Instrumental support seeking (M=22.2, SD= 6.89), Emotional support seeking (M= 13.4, SD=3.82) and Avoidance coping (M=7.72, SD=2.09).

The mean and S.D. of the big five personality traits are presented in Table 2. Results indicate participants scored highest in Openness (M= 33.6, SD=5.02) followed by Agreeableness (M= 31.0, SD=5.05) and least score in Conscientiousness (M= 28.2, SD=5.12) followed by Extraversion (M=23.7, SD= 4.73) and Neuroticism (M= 22.4, SD=5.02).

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation (S.D.) of Proactive Coping Inventory scale (N= 255)

Sub scales	Mean	SD
Proactive coping	39.6	6.21
Reflective coping	32.7	6.85
Strategic planning	11.7	2.80
Preventive coping	30.1	6.57
Instrumental support	22.2	6.89
Emotional support seeking	13.4	3.82
Avoidance coping	7.72	2.09

Source: Field Data

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation (S.D.) of Big Five Inventory scale (BFI)

Sub scales	Mean	SD
Openness	33.6	5.02
Conscientiousness	28.2	5.12
Extraversion	23.7	4.73
Agreeableness	31.0	5.05
Neuroticism	22.4	5.02

Source: Field Data

Table 3 shows Pearson's correlations between personality traits and coping styles. Here openness and extraversion are significantly positively correlated with proactive coping, reflective coping, strategic planning, preventive coping, instrumental support seeking, whereas conscientiousness and agreeableness is significantly positively correlated with proactive coping, reflective coping, strategic planning, preventive coping. Conscientiousness and extraversion are negatively correlated with avoidance coping (though not significant). Neuroticism is significantly negatively correlated with proactive coping, reflective coping, strategic planning, preventive coping, instrumental support seeking.

Table 3: Correlation between coping strategies and personality dimensions

	Proactive coping	Reflective coping	Strategic planning	Preventive coping	Instrumental support seeking	Emotional support seeking	Avoidance coping
Openness	0.363***	0.474***	0.383***	0.391***	0.227*	0.115	0.039
Conscientiousness	0.324**	0.357***	0.418***	0.385***	0.179	0.020	-0.161
Extraversion	0.471***	0.326**	0.309**	0.306**	0.267*	0.111	-0.049
Agreeableness	0.257*	0.433***	0.385***	0.417***	0.155	0.049	0.093
Neuroticism	-0.261*	-0.267*	-0.228*	-0.336**	-0.313**	-0.073	0.053

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ Source: Field Data

Table 4 shows the role of personality traits and coping style in predicting stress using binary logistic regression where stress was the dependent variable. Two separate logistic regression test was performed with personality traits and coping styles as independent variables respectively. For logistic equation 1, where personality factors were considered as independent variables for predicting stress, the logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(7) = 39.68, p < .001$ the model explained 16.3% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in stress and correctly classified 85.9% of cases. Neuroticism was found to be a predictor (risk factor) for stress ($p = .000$) but other personality dimensions did not show significant relationship in predicting stress.

For logistic equation 2, where coping styles were considered as independent variables for predicting stress, the logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(7) = 25.079, p < .000$. the model explained 25% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in stress and correctly classified 84.7% of cases. In case of coping strategies, proactive coping (.042) and emotional support seeking ($p = .000$) were protective factors for stress level.

Table 4: Logistic regression analysis of personality dimensions and coping strategies predicting stress.

Variable	Nagelkerke R^2	β	S.E.	Wald	Pvalue	OR	95%CI
Personality dimensions							
Openness	0.163	-.002	.044	.003	.959	.998	.916-1.087
Conscientiousness		.062	.042	2.2204	.138	1.064	.980-1.154
Extraversion		-.062	.050	1.529	.216	.940	.851-1.037
Agreeableness		.051	.045	1.290	.256	1.053	.963-1.151
Neuroticism		.184	.045	16.412	.000	1.202	1.099-1.313
Coping Strategies							

Proactive coping	.251	-.090	.044	4.125	.042	.914	.838 – .997
Reflective coping		.029	.057	.269	.604	1.030	.921 – 1.151
Strategic planning		.164	.125	1.724	.189	1.178	.922 – 1.504
Preventive coping		-.058	.049	1.392	.238	.943	.856 – 1.039
Instrumental support seeking		.032	.090	.540	.462	1.033	.948 – 1.126
Emotional support seeking		-.361	.102	15.953	.000	.697	.584 – .832
Avoidance coping		-.124	.883	1.464	.226		.723 – 1.080

Source: Field Data

Table 5 shows the differences between males and females with respect to the coping dimensions. Significant differences in case of gender have been observed for instrumental support seeking and avoidance coping, with males having high score in case of instrumental support seeking whereas females scored higher in avoidance coping.

Table 5: Differences between males and females with respect to proactive coping inventory scores

	Mean		t	p	Cohen's d
	Males	Females			
Proactive coping	39.68	39.47	.272	.786	0.033
Reflective coping	32.82	32.55	.303	.762	0.039
Strategic planning	11.78	11.55	.632	.528	0.082
Preventive coping	30.33	29.64	.820	.413	0.105
Instrumental support seeking	23.45	20.35	3.613	.000	0.462
Emotional support seeking	13.52	13.11	.847	.398	0.108

Avoidance coping	7.47	8.08	2.340	.020	-0.299
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Source: Field Data

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between different personality dimensions and coping styles and find out which personality dimensions and coping styles predict stress. Also, the study examined the differences between males and females with respect to coping styles. Here in this study, we have used the Big five questionnaire to evaluate personality traits, which includes openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Openness is a multidimensional facet describing accessibility, transparency and willing to accept new ideas which is expressed as core personality traits such as curiosity, creativity, imagination. Conscientiousness is a conglomeration of traits such as self-discipline, organization, and dependability. Individuals high in this dimension are generally goal oriented, plans ahead and acts in a disciplined, dutiful way to achieve aims. It also involves more matured control of impulses on the part of the individual and redirecting them, following rules and carrying out tasks efficiently. Extraversion, a personality trait encompassing character traits such that are more focussed on the external world, with individuals who are adept in social interactions and are in search of external stimulation. Extraversion involves traits such as sociability, assertiveness, talkativeness, enthusiasm and stimulation seeking. Agreeableness amalgamates traits such as kindness, empathy, and cooperation. Individuals high in this dimension generally prioritizes social harmony and social relationships, usually trust others and have an altruistic nature. In nutshell these individuals prefer cooperation over conflict. Lastly, neuroticism is portrayed by a chronic/innate tendency to experience negative emotions coupled by emotional instability, anxiety, depression and self-doubt. Individuals high on this trait often perceive benign situations as threatening and they have poor and biased perception and management of stress.

Results show there exists a significant positive correlation in case of extraversion and openness personality traits with proactive coping style, reflective coping style, strategic planning style, preventive coping style and instrumental support seeking style. Also there exists a significant positive correlation between conscientiousness and agreeableness with proactive coping, reflective coping, strategic planning, preventive coping. Neuroticism personality trait shows a significant negative correlation with proactive coping style, reflective coping style, strategic planning style, preventive coping style and instrumental support seeking style. According to the findings it can be said that individuals high in extraversion and openness tend to use more adaptive coping strategies, this also holds equally true for individuals high in conscientiousness and agreeableness. An interesting observation is that conscientiousness and extraversion have also shown negative correlation with avoidance coping style whereas openness and agreeableness have positive correlation with avoidance coping style (both not statistically significant). Proactive coping involves taking initiative and planning ahead to prevent stress. It is possible that individuals who are open to new experiences tend to engage more in proactive coping who are organized and responsible, are also likely to use proactive coping whereas reflective coping is also a proactive, cognitive strategy involving self-reflection to analyse stressors, reflect on emotional reactions and refine coping responses. Strategic planning style involves locating a goal and analysing which operations or resources need to be aligned with that goal. It requires identifying which operations are working well and which are not and brainstorming ideas to address problems. Strategic planning is a methodical approach to managing stress and preventive coping involves taking action such as building resources or actively planning to reduce the outcome of plausible future stressors. Study findings suggest that individuals high on extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness have shown to use this all these types of coping. Earlier research findings have also documented that individuals high on extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness are more prone to use proactive and reflective coping styles (Akter, Sultana &, Akter 2020; Chai, & Low 2015). Instrumental support coping involves practical assistance that helps individual manage

and reduce stress and fulfil personal needs, results reveal that extroverts and individuals high in openness seek instrumental support more frequently. It maybe that individuals high on extraversion and openness generally are more socially active and direct their energy towards external situations are more prone to use these types of coping styles, which is in consistent with some of previous researches (Afshar et al., 2015).

The study results have demonstrated that higher neuroticism is associated with less use of proactive coping, reflective coping, strategic planning, preventive coping, instrumental support whereas positively correlated with avoidance coping (though not statistically significant). Avoidance coping involves evading the stressor rather than challenging or opposing it. In elaborating on this it could be argued that as neuroticism is more associated with subjective experiences of stress and anxiety symptoms (Ebstrup, 2011) they are usually more susceptible to anxiety/obsessional and irrational thoughts, rumination which in turn renders them towards poor impulse control (Costa, McCrae, 1992.), also they have a tendency to experience negative emotions (McCrae, Costa, 1987), so their coping mechanisms usually gets driven towards managing these issues rather than actively seeking solutions to stressful situations. It may be due to this they generally more towards more maladaptive coping styles (Lee-Baggley, Preece, Delongis 2005; Chai &Low, 2015). Considering the regression analysis, it shows that in case of personality dimensions neuroticism is a risk factor predicting stress and in case of coping strategies, proactive coping and emotional support seeking style have emerged as protective factors of stress. This perception or understanding can help customize psychological interventions to enhance coping mechanisms by considering individual personality profiles. Analysing gender differences with regard to coping scores shows significant differences in case of instrumental support seeking and avoidance coping. Instrumental support seeking involves looking for practical help from others. Mean score of males was found to be higher for instrumental support seeking which indicates that there is a tendency in males to use proactive, problem-focused coping strategies which generally involves tangible help, advice, or resources

to manage stressful situations. Whereas higher mean scores have been observed in case of females for avoidance coping indicating that females are more likely to change their behaviour to evade uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, or situations rather than addressing them. Study by Graves et al., 2021 reveal that females employ emotion-focussed coping dimensions which include self-distraction, emotional support, instrumental support, and venting more than males (Graves et al., 2021). Also, research has documented that females indulge more in Blame/Denial type of Coping whereas males tend to engage more in emotion focused way of coping (Som & Patil, 2019).

Conclusion

The study attempted to offer a comprehensive understanding about the relationship between personality dimensions, coping styles and stress among college students. Several connections have been revealed between personality dimensions and coping styles. With respect to personality dimensions neuroticism has emerged as a risk factor for stress and in case of coping styles proactive coping and emotional support seeking are protecting factors for stress. Gender differences are found in case of instrumental support seeking and avoidance coping. The study provided knowledge about personality dimensions, coping styles and stress providing opportunities for fostering specific actions or intervention strategies for stress management. The study suffers some limitations. Firstly, as the study was conducted on college students in Singur region of West-Bengal (WB) it provided a somewhat constrained view of the issue, it would be better if we could include college students from different regions of WB and then the results could have been generalized to the entire population residing in WB. Secondly, as the data is collected in online mode and also self-report questionnaires were used, there may be incorrect/ biased data. It would be better if the data collection could be conducted offline. Thirdly, more specific results would have been obtained if some other criteria such as socio economics status, background, culture, life events etc. could be incorporated in the study. Fourthly, it would be better if large sample could be used. Lastly in this study the relationship between personality traits, coping strategies and stress has been studied but it would be further

contributory if we could trace the developmental trajectory as to why certain personality traits are more prone to use certain coping strategies and if early life exposure to stressful situation shapes choice of certain coping strategies. Attending to these limitations would fortify the study's findings and enhance the understanding of the relationship between personality traits, coping strategies and stress.

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