

A Study on Role of Personality Traits and Stress Coping Styles in Mental Wellbeing of Students

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Abstract

This research evaluates role of personality traits and stress coping styles in mental wellbeing of the considered students. 200 students were selected by adopting clustered multistage sampling. Then, they were asked to complete three inventories: Short Personality 5-Factor Inventory, Inventory of Stress Coping Styles (Calcic et al., 2008), and Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale. After collecting completed questionnaires and recording them, the researchers performed Pearson's correlation analysis and multivariate regression analysis for examining the hypotheses. As the findings demonstrate, agreeableness, flexibility, extroversion, and neuroticism are significantly correlated with mental wellbeing. Additionally, stress coping styles are positively interrelated with mental wellbeing. Also, correlation coefficients are increased by 0.62 by adding agreeableness, neuroticism, extroversion, emotion orientation, and flexibility.

Key words: Personality traits, Coping Styles, Mental Wellbeing.

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Introduction

Rejoiced heart and sense of prosperity are divine inspirations in light of mental and physical health. Mental convenience is one of crucial parameters for human evolution and promotion. This is specifically significant to students. Attempts for satisfactory life are made in all periods of humans. Upright humans permanently seek for more satisfactory and constructive life ways and means (Myers, 2000). Happiness is a considerable concern to thinkers during thousands of years; yet it has been systematically studied since few recent years. Most people describe their life events satisfied or unsatisfied and naturally can judge their life. They experience temper-related emotions, including either satisfied components which lead to positive reactions or unsatisfied components which cause negative reactions. Accordingly, some levels of mental happiness are experienced even unconsciously (Mozafari & Hadianfard, 2011). Happiness is one of sustained personal traits, which is significantly affected by mental welfare (Poorzaree, 2013). Happiness comes out of inherent temperament i.e. it is not touchable, which help us think, feel, and do something (Mortazavizadeh, 2014). Psychologists define happiness as mental prosperity, which is a so-called umbrella covering all values of humans. These values include life satisfaction, emotion, positive temperament, and absence of depression and stress, which are manifested by cognitions and emotions (Diener et al., 2002 as cited in Esmaelifar, Shafee Abadi, and Ghodsi, 2012). A proper understanding and adoption of happiness are two crucial components of positivist psychology and involve satisfied emotions, lower levels of negative emotions, and high satisfaction of life (Esmaelifar, Shafee Abadi, and Ghodsi, 2012). Mental prosperity contains generally positive feeling of satisfaction of our own and others' life. Thus, persons with high sense of prosperity primarily experience greater positive emotions and positively evaluate their surrounding settings and events while low level of this sense causes humans' negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and anger (Myers and Diener, 1995). Psychological well-being is described as development of a person's inherent talents (Carmelo, Gonzalo, Jose, and Diego, 2009). There are two main approaches to well-being: Hedonism and virtue-orientation. The former defines well-being as mental happiness and avoidance of pain while the latter primarily considers wellbeing as actualization of personal potentials during perception process. Generally, in clinical psychology, virtue-orientation is more likely actualized due to its relationship with human potentials and empowerment (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Moeinzadeh and Kumar, 2010 as cited in Naderi Beldaji et al., 2013). In the other words, wellbeing is defined as emotional and cognitive reactions to perceptions of personal capabilities and traits, adequate advancement, effective interaction with world, satisfied relationship with community, and timely positive progress. It can contain life satisfaction and positive energy (Karademas, 2007; Bahadori Khosroshahi, 2011). Scholars of well-being are divided into subjective well-being and psychological well-being (Linley, Maltby, Wood, Osborne, and Herling, 2009). Affective well-being and cognitive well-being are defined as balance between positive and negative emotions and a person's evaluation of life satisfaction respectively (Bakhshi, Daemi, and Ajilchi, 2009; Joshanloo, Rostami, and Nosrat Abadi, 2006). As Diener (2009) points out, subjective well-being is publicly called happiness. Health psychologists view mental and physical well-being as will of all humans. All humans seek for healthy personality in order to establish healthy relationship (Khodayarifard and Prand, 2013). Which of humans have healthy personality? Personality health is related to culture. Culture can build barriers against growth of humans or can facilitate it (Zaree and Asadi, 2011). As Forum (2005) suggests, Psychological health and wellbeing is affected by the fact that to what extent society considers human personality as result of culture and to what extent it can fulfill essential needs of people rather than to what extent society members are compatible with society. Accordingly, mental health is primarily a social matter of concern. An unhealthy society increasingly causes suspicion, hostility, and lack of belief among its members while a healthy community encourages efficiency, innovation, and love and improves their reasonability and objectivity. Personality is a sustained set of properties and attitudes, determining similarities and differences of psychological behaviors i.e. thoughts, emotions, and practices of persons who follow temporal sequences and are not easily identified and understood due to biological and social pressures of intermediate situations (Maddi, 1972 as cited in Karimi,

2013). Family is very significant as the first environment of human personality development. Specifically, relationship of parents can significantly impact upon the balanced affective-mental growth (Brozeneski, 2004). Personality traits can offer patterns for predicting mental state and behavior of persons (Mosalae, 2013). Hence, personality traits play a significant role in identifying coping styles and improving mental wellbeing of people during proper training of coping styles (Behlekeh, 2005). Mental wellbeing relies on thought, feeling, and practice of people. Generally, individuals having mental wellbeing pursue proper coping styles for encountering stressful events, adopt more positive attitudes towards life, tend to face life difficulties (Golmohamadi, 2008), and experience deeper feeling about themselves and others. They are accountable to their work and relations because humans expect the best events and tend to face any problem in light of mental well-being. By effectively training of mental wellbeing properties, people can enjoy a balanced and delighted mentality (Carr, 2004). On the other hand, personality is one of most controversial discussions and most emphasized concepts of psychology (Ahangar Anzabi, 2008). The term *personality* is derived from *persona* i.e. masks used by actors of ancient theaters and showed their role (Zareh, Pirkhaeghi, and Mobini, 2010). Emphasis on relative personality is increasingly made by personal and relational problems (Karimzadeh, 2012). As determinants of mental inconvenience should be identified for avoiding it and enjoying mental wellbeing and as mental inconvenience and lack of mental wellbeing are resulted from personality traits and inappropriate coping styles, a deep understanding of relationship between mental health and typology of coping styles and training of effective coping styles can contribute to adolescent mental health. Health habits, health risks, and their determinants are shaped in adolescence. Therefore, the present study evaluates role of personality traits and coping styles in predicting mental wellbeing.

The Research Hypotheses

There is relationship between personality traits and mental wellbeing in male and female students;
 There is relationship between coping styles and mental wellbeing in male and female students; and
 Personality traits and stress coping styles can predict mental wellbeing of students.

Methodology

Correlational research involves all studies measuring relationship between different variables by calculating their correlational coefficients. These studies primarily attempt to identify correlations between variables and predict their impact upon each other. In the other words, correlational research is the understanding of complicated patterns of variables heightened by evaluating correlations between these patterns. Specifically, these studies evaluate relationships between variables, which have not yet been examined (Delavar, 1995). This study population consists of 200 students in dormitories of Tehran (100 males and 100 females). They were selected from different majors by adopting clustered multistage sampling.

The Research Tools

Short Personality 5-Factor Inventory: This inventory contains 60 question items for evaluating five main factors of personality. McCray and Costa (1992) reveal a correlation of 0.77-0.92 between subscales of short form and long form. Additionally, internal consistency of subscales ranges between 0.68-0.86. Scores are adjusted to five-point Likert scale (1= I completely agree; 5= I completely disagree). Some questions are reversely scored. In this inventory, normalized by Garoosi (1998), the calculated coefficients of neuroticism, extroversion, agreeableness, flexibility, consciousness are 0.83, 0.75, 0.80, 0.79, and 0.79 respectively while the calculated coefficients of neuroticism, extroversion, flexibility, agreeableness, and consciousness are 0.86, 0.73, 0.56, 0.68, and 0.87 respectively in Rezaee et al. (2012). This questionnaire is highly valid and reliable among students of humanities in Iran with almost the same factorial structure of that in America and Europe (Kiamehr, 2002). Validity coefficients of neuroticism, extroversion, consciousness, agreeableness, and flexibility measured by adopting internal consistency method are 0.79, 0.76, 0.78, 0.54, and 0.61 respectively. In Zaree and Asadi (2011), validity coefficients of neuroticism, extroversion, flexibility, agreeableness, and consciousness measured by adopting Alpha method are 0.83, 0.75, 0.80, 0.79, and 0.79 respectively.

Inventory of Stress Coping Styles (Calcic et al., 2008): This inventory consists of 21 question items, evaluating three coping styles. Scores are adjusted to four-point Likert scale. Stress coping styles refer to cognitive and behavioral strategies for avoiding, managing, and reducing stresses. Three main stress coping styles are problem-based coping styles, emotion-based coping styles, and avoidance coping styles (Endler and Parker, 1990). Problem-based coping styles involve strategies for finding additional information about the concerned problems, changing their structures cognitively, and measuring and prioritizing solutions. Emotion-based coping styles are methods for concentrating on ourselves and reducing negative feelings, including irritation, emotional reactions, tears, complaints, and mental concerns. The third are primarily behaviors of avoidance.

Reliability Coefficients: According to Endler and Parker (2005), the reliability coefficient of problem-based coping styles, emotion-based coping styles, and avoidance coping styles is above %80 in different samples including adolescent members. Cronbach Alpha coefficients of problem-based coping styles, emotion-based coping styles, and avoidance coping styles are %75, %82, and %73 (Shokri et al., 2008).

Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale: This inventory has 84 question items and 6 factors. The respondents responded to the questions on the basis of 6-point scale (from I completely disagree to I Completely agree). 48 questions and 37 questions were scored directly and reversely respectively. In Lindfors, Berntsson, and Lundberg (2006), the calculated internal consistency coefficients of different components are between 0.65 and 0.70. Also, the calculated reliability coefficients of acceptance, environmental control, independence, positive relationship with others, target-orientation, and personal growth, measured by Cronbach's alpha, are respectively %93, %90, %86, %91, %90, and %86.

Findings

Table 1- Frequency of Students

	Frequency	Percent
Females	96	%49.2
Males	99	%50.8

Table 1 shows that %50.8 and %49.2 of respondents are male and female respectively.

Table 2- Frequency of Students' Education Level

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Associate of Arts	41	21.0
BA	88	45.1
MA	66	33.8

Hypothesis 1: There is relationship between personality traits and mental wellbeing in male and female students. Pearson's correlation test was performed for analyzing this hypothesis. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3- Correlation between Personality Traits and Mental Wellbeing

Personality Traits	Mental Wellbeing
Flexibility	** .391
Consciousness	* .167
extroversion	** .411
agreeableness	** .439
neuroticism	** .416

* $P < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

The findings reveal a significant relationship between flexibility, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism and mental well-being. Agreeableness is significantly correlated with mental wellbeing to the greatest extent ($r = 0.43$) while consciousness is interrelated with mental wellbeing to the lowest extent ($r = 0.16$). The calculated coefficients of correlation between flexibility, extroversion, and neuroticism and mental wellbeing are 0.39, 0.41, and 0.41.

Hypothesis 2: There is relationship between coping styles and mental wellbeing in male and female students.

Table 4- Correlation between Stress Coping Styles & Mental Well-being

	Mental Wellbeing
Emotion-based Stress Coping Styles	** .320
Problem-based Stress Coping Styles	** .203
Avoidance Styles	* -0.161

* $P < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

The findings reveal a significant relationship between stress coping styles and mental well-being. Emotion-based coping style is significantly correlated with mental wellbeing to the greatest extent ($r = 0.32$) while avoidance style is significantly interrelated with mental wellbeing to the lowest extent ($r = -0.16$). The calculated coefficients of correlation between flexibility, extroversion, and neuroticism and mental wellbeing are respectively 0.39, 0.41, and 0.41.

Hypothesis 3: Personality traits and stress coping styles can predict mental wellbeing of students. This hypothesis was analyzed by using step-by-step multivariate regression.

Table 5- The Inserted Variables, The Model Summary, and Regression Coefficients in Regression Analysis

Model	R	Squared R	Adjusted R Square	Measured Standard Error
1	.439(a)	.193	.189	.63992
2	.524(b)	.275	.267	.60807
3	.574(c)	.329	.318	.58645
4	.607(d)	.368	.355	.57054
5	.624(e)	.390	.373	.56235

a= Agreeableness; b= Agreeableness and neuroticism; c= Agreeableness, neuroticism, and extroversion; d= Agreeableness, neuroticism, extroversion, and emotion orientation; e= Agreeableness, neuroticism, extroversion, emotion orientation, and flexibility. Table 5 shows R, R square, adjusted R square, and standard error. The calculated R is 0.43 when agreeableness is the predictive variable. This value is increased by 0.62 by adding other predictive variables including neuroticism, extroversion, emotion orientation, and flexibility.

Table 6- Variance Analysis for Predictive variables' Level of Significance

Model		Sum of Squares	Degree of freedom	Mean of Square	F	Level of Significance
1	Regression	18.673	1	18.673	45.601	.000(a)
	Residual	78.213	191	.409		
	Total	96.886	192			
2	Regression	26.633	2	13.317	36.015	.000(b)
	Residual	70.253	190	.370		
	Total	96.886	192			
3	Regression	31.884	3	10.628	30.902	.000(c)
	Residual	65.002	189	.344		
	Total	96.886	192			
4	Regression	35.688	4	8.922	27.408	.000(d)
	Residual	61.198	188	.326		
	Total	96.886	192	7.550		
5	Regression	37.750	5	.316		
	Residual	59.136	187			
	Total	96.886	192			

a= Agreeableness; b= Agreeableness and neuroticism; c= Agreeableness, neuroticism, and extroversion; d= Agreeableness, neuroticism, extroversion, and emotion orientation; e= Agreeableness, neuroticism, extroversion, emotion orientation, and flexibility; f= mental wellbeing

Table 6 shows variance analysis on predictive models' level of significance. Agreeableness is only inserted into the first model. Model 2 contains neuroticism along with agreeableness. Also, extroversion, emotion orientation, and flexibility are inserted into the last model in addition to these two variables. All predictive models are statistically significant.

Table 7- Standardized Correlation Coefficients and Non-standardized Correlation Coefficients of Independent variables for Predicting Mental Wellbeing (Model 5)

		Non-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Level of Significance
		B	Measured Standard Error	B	9.828	0.000
1	Constant	1.860	.189		6.753	0.000
	Agreeableness	.426	.063	.439	10.562	0.000
2	Constant	2.708	.256		5.094	0.000
	Agreeableness	.325	.064	.335	-4.640	0.000
	Neuroticism	-.213	.046	-.305	7.636	0.000
3	Constant	2.165	.284		7.636	0.000
	Agreeableness	.235	.066	.242	3.579	0.000
	Neuroticism	-.194	.256	-.278	-4.358	0.000
	Extroversion	.232	.064	.255	3.907	0.000
4	Constant	1.964	.46		6.961	0.004
	Agreeableness	.190	.284	.196	2.910	0.000
	Neuroticism	-.193	.066	-.276	-4.451	0.000
	Extroversion	.221	.045	.243	3.810	0.001
	Emotion-oriented Coping	.131	.059	.205	3.418	0.000
5	Constant	1.531	0.282		4.704	0.000
	Agreeableness	.173	.065	.178	2.675	0.008
	Neuroticism	-.179	.043	-.256	-4.153	0.003
	Extroversion	.178	.060	.195	2.977	0.003
	Emotion-oriented Coping	.117	.038	.184	3.086	0.002
	Flexibility	.208	.081	.163	2.554	0.011

Table 7 shows standardized and non-standardized correlation coefficients, T statistics, and level of significance of predictive variables. The greatest B coefficient is related to agreeableness i.e. 0.43. The second significant variable is neuroticism i.e. -0.30. Other Beta coefficients are also shown.

Discussion & Conclusion:

This research evaluates role of personality traits and stress coping styles in mental wellbeing of the considered students. 200 students were selected by adopting clustered multistage sampling. After collecting completed questionnaires and recording them, the researchers performed Pearson's correlation analysis and multivariate regression analysis for examining the hypotheses. As the findings demonstrate, agreeableness, flexibility, extroversion, and neuroticism are significantly correlated with mental wellbeing. Specifically, agreeableness is significantly correlated with mental wellbeing to the greatest extent ($r=0.43$) while consciousness is interrelated with mental wellbeing to the lowest extent ($r=0.16$). This result is consistent with Terry (1994) finding that extrovert students primarily adopt active coping, planned coping, replicated positive interpretation, avoidance of hurried coping, and distance while introvert students concentrate on desirous thinking and negative affective thinking. Personality traits are of determinants at the time of coping style adoption. Their role in mental health

relies on different persons and situations. Personal traits can impact upon life events, their evaluation, and coping style. As Tavangar (1994) points out, extrovert persons adopt effective coping styles such as problem-solving and planned problem-solving while introvert persons often concentrate on avoidance and non-accountability. Furthermore, correlational analysis indicates relationship between stress coping styles and mental well-being. Specifically, emotion-based coping style is significantly correlated with mental wellbeing to the greatest extent ($r=0.32$) while avoidance style is significantly interrelated with mental wellbeing to the lowest extent ($r=-0.16$). This finding is in agreement with Strelau (2005) discovering relationship between coping styles and mental health i.e. desirous thinking, negative thinking, affective thinking, and avoidance impair mental well-being quality while active coping, planned coping, positive interpretation, and avoidance of hurried coping improve mental health. Avoidance and other emotional coping styles negatively affect mental health (Hynes, Callan, Terry, and Coallois, 2006). Weakly reacting persons display undesirable behavior while effectively reacting persons avoid settings stimulating strong emotional tensions Strelau (2005). Mouse and Blings (2000) view problem-based approach as a more effective stress controller relative to emotion-based approach. They categorize replicated positive interpretation as a problem-based approach, which reduces tensions. Perception-based coping involve cognitive attempts including replicated positive interpretation and clearly positive attitudes towards changing meaning of stressful events (Twits, 1995).

Suggestions

- 1- As stress is directly interrelated with mental distress and as lower level of mental health causes boys and girls to adopt weaker coping strategies, psychologists are recommended to offer proper stress coping training for helping students face academic stresses and improving their mental health quality. Specifically, active coping style, planned coping styles, replicated positive interpretation, avoidance of hurried coping, and distance should be emphasized;
- 2- Since there is significant correlation between gender and problem-based coping style and problem-based approach makes contribution to stress control relative to emotion-based approach, students should gain a deeper understanding of this style. Perception-based coping involve cognitive attempts including replicated positive interpretation and clearly positive attitudes towards changing meaning of stressful events (Twits, 1995); and
- 3- Because inefficient coping styles can cause potential stressful settings and threaten mental health, this study findings can offer an effective guideline for selecting coping styles, identifying at-risk candidates, and solving their problems.

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