

Literature review on personality and coping styles



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The different personality and coping style will cause different stress level. Coping styles may well be extensively influenced by personality (Hayes & Joseph, 2003). This statement is come from the idea that there is no reason to believe that coping responses differ necessarily from other cognitive, affective and behavioral responses. The most important taxonomy in Industrial/Organisational psychology has been the “ Big Five” or Five Factor Model, which has generally been accepted as an accurate model of personality (Salgado, 2003). The Big Five personality traits incorporated in this study are five personality factors: Neuroticism; Extraversion; Openness to Experience; Agreeableness; and Conscientiousness. Regarding previous coping and personality research, it is not clear if coping styles are dependent on the environment in which the stressor is faced, or another system such as personality, or as a result of a combination of the two, a key point this research will attempt to explain (Jang, Thordarson, Stein, Cohan, & Taylor, 2007).

Even though most theoretical models of the stress process recognize the importance of individual differences, there is relatively empirical work to recognize relevant and measurable individual differences, clarify how they impact the stress-coping process, or empirically test the impact of individual differences on the stress-coping process (Jex, Bliese, Buzzell, & Primeau, 2001). This present study takes the viewpoint that it seems not likely people are born a different in every crisis they meet and must carry ‘ person bound’ factors with them from stressor to stressor, factors that may also affect the choice of coping strategy used (Amirkhan, Risinger, & Swickert, 1995).

This perception is consistent with psycho dynamically oriented personality theorists who always view coping as stable personality of the individual (McCrae & Costa 1986). Lazarus has emphasized that coping reactions can change from moment to moment across the stages of a stressful transaction (Carver & Scheier, 1994). Although there is proof coping can become accustomed from moment to moment, the current research is based on the idea that there is value in the argument that people develop habitual ways of dealing with stress based on personality traits and these coping styles (habits) can influence their reactions in new situations (Carver & Scheier, 1994).

Personality in relation to an individual's coping styles poses the question of whether specific coping behaviors do actually come together to form a consistent style based on dispositional factors (Mitsuhiro, Gregory, Patricia, Patricia, & et al., 2001). Lazarus has noted that these types of questions can be addressed only if independent assessments of personality dimensions and coping behaviors are used. This study tries to examine the relations between personality and coping by employing conceptually and operationally independent measures of each (McCrae & Costa 1986).

The main purpose of this research was to identify and examine the effects of personality as a mediator and direct effect in the stress-coping relationship, the effects of stressor appraisal, control perceptions and personality on the stress-coping process and coping effectiveness and the relation between coping methods used and resulting coping effectiveness. In doing so the concept of ' coping style' was explored to determine if there was an association between appraisal, personality, situational factors and coping

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behaviors used, and to determine whether students established a preference or consistency in their coping behavior by using a consistent coping style, by using two different stressful situations.

Social support

Social support refers to the experience being, respected, cared about, valued and loved by others who are present in one's life (Gurung, 2006). It may come from different sources such as family, friends, teachers, community, or any social groups to which one is allied. Social support can come in the form of tangible assistance provided by others when needed, it includes appraisal of effective coping strategies, and emotional support as well as different situations,.

Social support is an element that can help people to decrease the amount of stress experienced and to help people in dealing with stressful situations.

Several studies stated that supportive contacts link negatively with symptoms and psychological disorder such as stress, depression and other psychiatric disorder, and positively link with physical and mental health. A study by Nahid and Sarkis (1994) found that social support protects people in life crisis such as illness, bereavement, and moderates the effect of stressors on psychological well being.

Social support thus is get into into a very wide range of informal helping relationships between the individual and other people. Most commonly these people are friends and family, but various other people may help (Cowen 1982).

First, social support is very important for individuals in their life. Deficits in social support have been shown to be related to many psychological problems such as, loneliness, depression and anxiety (Eskin, 2003). Elliot and Gramling (1990) found that social support helps the college students to reduce depression, anxiety, and stress. They also found that social support could help the students reduce and manage their psychological problems. Therefore, this study is to recognize how social support could play its role in face with depression, anxiety, and stress is necessary.

Second, social support has also been recognized to have major impact on the achievement of the students. Since family and friends are the individuals' first source of reference, supports from these two sources have been found to give a significant influence on academic achievement (Steinberg and Darling, 1994; Cutrona, 1994). The support received by the students could help to reduce their psychological problems since they feel that someone is there to help them, helping them to perform well in academic life. By having knowledge on how social support could help students to perform well in study and cope with any psychological turbulence, much information could be derived to improve the amount of support provided.

Third, this study also hopes to give the research on how to help and manage students' academic achievement. By having better understanding and knowledge about social support in relation to psychological condition of the students, it could help us to plan and organize suitable development program to help them. Since social support is important to students, this study will also help family, especially parents, understand their roles in

helping their children so that they can help the students to reduce their psychological problems.

It has long been stated that the quality of social support and personality are centre to the individual's adjustment. The quality of social support perceived and received has been reported by several studies to link more positively with mental health than the quantity of support received (e. g., Nahid and Sarkis, 1994; Holahan et al., 1995).

To understand the role of perceived and received social support in dealing with mental health, we have to refer the research on the stress-buffering effect which emphasize on both types of social support. The former based on the principle that helps are available if needed, whereas, the latter based on the actual helps obtained. Both of these are thought to protect against stress by lessening the extent to which situations are perceived as a risk to well-being and rising the belief that necessary resources are available.

Investigation of mechanisms underlying the stress-buffering effect of social support has focused on how social support influences stress-related appraisals and coping (Lakey and Cohen, 2000).

Social support was found to be one of the most important protective factors for students (Tao et al., 2000). This is because social support includes social resources that individuals perceive to be available or that are actually offered to them which could help protect against psychological problems.

According to Teoh and Rose (2001), lower level of social support is one of the predictors of psychological problems. It is associated with higher level of depression, anxiety, attention problems, thought problems, social problems,
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somatic complaints, and lower self esteem. These notions are supported by the study of Friedlander et al. (2007) on 128 first year undergraduate students. It was found that students who perceived that their social resources increased had lower level of psychological problems. This shows that the impact of a stressful situation for example can be decreased when students have good social support. Advice and encouragement from sources of support may also increase the likelihood that an individual will rely on active problem solving and information seeking. These may assist students in dealing with various stressors in the environment and facilitate a positive adjustment process.

The supportive actions provided by the social support are thought to buffer the impact of stress by increasing the effectiveness of coping efforts, which in turn decrease distress among students (e. g., Holahan, et al., 1995; Lakey and Cohen, 2000). For example, receiving emotional support and companionship may encourage effective adaptation among students in facing and coping with uncontrollable events. A study by Rawson, Bloomer and Kendall (1994) on 184 undergraduate students for example, found that students with good social supports tend to have lower scores on stress compared to the students with low social support. This study has found that coping behavior and social support structures moderate the effects of stress among students in their academic life.

Since social support was found to be buffering effects of stress, it could decrease the use of harmful disengagement coping strategies such as avoidance, withdrawal, and denial among students. Consequently, it can increase the use of beneficial engagement coping strategies because

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individuals believe their social network includes someone who is willing to listen (Fleishman et al., 2000; Tao et al., 2000). It also influences response to social stressors by providing a basis for positive thinking and cognitive restructuring or by encouraging people to believe they have resources to call on if they wish to distract themselves from a painful situation (Calvete and Connor-Smith, 2006). In a cross-sectional study, Holahan et al. (1995) found first-year students with higher levels of perceived parental support were better adjusted (i. e., higher well-being and happiness) and less distressed (i. e., less depression and anxiety) than those with lower levels of perceived parental support.

There are three dimensions of support provided by family and friend that is warmth, behavioral control, and psychological autonomy-granting. These three dimensions facilitate the development of positive self-conceptions and social skills, responsibility and competence, and impulse control and deterrence of deviance which in turn lead to low level of psychological problems the students. This support has also been found necessary for healthy level of development (Oswald and Suss, 1994). For example these two sources of social support, i. e., family and friends, are the predictor of individual's psychological well-being. The combination of family and friend support with acceptance and emotional warmth has been associated with higher grades in school and college, less misconduct, less psychological distress, and less delinquency among students of all social classes which would produce significant effects on adolescence academic achievement (Silbereisen and Todt, 1994).

Social support has been conceptualised as a component and as a context of adaptive behaviour. As a component, significant others constitute external social resources, which can be mobilised. They are providers of perception-focused, emotion-focused or tangible coping assistance. Both as a component and as a context, social factors influence appraisals of the situation and of personal control early in a person's career. As a contextual factor, cohesive social groups and dyads form a secure base and sense of existential anchoring or coherence, in which complex coping behaviour can take place (Waltz 1994).

From the previous research, it could be concluded that social support from family and friends plays an important role in dealing with psychological problems because supports provided by family and friend could lower down the psychological problems on students. This means that the higher the social support, the lower are the psychological problems. Otherwise, the lower is the social support, the higher are the psychological problems.