

Behavioral approach coping style as a function of Happiness and Personality trait

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Abstract: *The present study attempted to explore the effect of Happiness and Neuroticism on behavioral approach coping style of Medical professionals. A sample of 160 medical professionals (80 male & 80 female) were taken from government and private hospitals of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. The age ranges of subjects were 35 to 45 years. Analysis of variance was used to analyze the data. Results indicated that happiness promotes adoption of behavioral approach coping in medical professionals. Low neuroticism promotes adoption of behavioral approach coping in both male and female medical professionals and female in comparison to male medical professionals with high neuroticism adopt more behavioral approach coping whereas male in comparison to female medical professionals with low neuroticism adopt more behavioral approach coping.*

Keywords: *Happiness, Neuroticism, Behavioral coping style.*

1. Introduction

In today's hyper competitive and busy world, we all lead incredibly stressful lifestyles. We experience stress due to a multitude of reasons. Some of these factors include financial problems, difficult boss, unsatisfying job, relationship problems or even hardships faced while one is in medical profession. Medical profession is a stressful and challenging branch, because of the psychological pressure inherent to this process. Alexandros Stamatios G. Antoniou, Marilyn J. Davidson, Cary L. Cooper, (2003) stated that doctors have significantly higher levels of sources of pressure than the normative population and other comparative occupational samples. Riley (2004) proposed that stress in doctors is a product of the interaction between the demanding nature of their work and their often obsessive, conscientious, and committed personalities.

The task of managing or coping with stress is an important determinant of happiness (positivity) and personality traits in individual's life. The role played by the individual in the coping process is a matter of great concern. Neuroticism (an important factor of Big-5 personality trait) also plays a big role in choosing coping style. If a person is unable to cope well effectively with stress, there are chances that he/she may develop certain psychosomatic symptoms, which in turn hamper the efficiency and effectiveness of his personal adjustment. It is argued that a maladaptive coping style with lack of positivity predict increased occupational stress.

Keeping in mind the current perspective of stress and importance of positivity in this profession such as medical with its coping styles this research took the Initiative to study and compare variables for male and female both medical professionals in Indian context.

1.1 Major Objectives of the Present Study

- To determine the effect of positivity (Happiness) on coping style (Behavioral approach) of Medical professionals,
- To determine the effect of Personality (Neuroticism) on coping style (Behavioral approach) of Medical professionals.

1.2 Hypotheses of the study

- Positivity (Happiness) will affect the coping style (Behavioral Approach) of medical professionals.
- Personality trait (Neuroticism) will affect the coping style (Behavioral Approach) of medical professionals.
- Personality traits, positivity, and gender will affect mutually each other in determining coping styles of medical professionals.

2. Review of literature

2.1 Coping related reviews

Eslami Akbar (2017) explored the experiences of the nurses in order to reveal the original coping process of the 15 clinical nurses and four directors of nursing in the case of encountering occupational stress. The findings revealed that Nurses adopt context-based coping (avoidance coping) to cope with job stress which could help in lighten up the grey consequences of job stress in nurses whereas in contrast **Jan, Kour, and Para (2017)** studied the coping styles of 120 staff nurses working in emergency and general wards of SKIMS Hospital Soura Srinagar and found that staff nurses of both emergency and general wards adopt more frequently problem solving, and positive re-appraisal coping strategy.

2.2 Neuroticism related reviews

Sobowale, Ham, Curlin and Yoon (2018) studied the personality traits that are associated with academic achievement in 474 third-year medical students. The aim of study is to determine whether Big Five personality traits were associated with receiving honors/highest grade in clinical clerkships, failing a course or rotation, and being selected for the Alpha Omega Alpha or Gold Humanism Honor Society. The findings were personality trait conscientiousness is important, in predicting success during the clinical years of medical school. In contrast, students high in neuroticism were less likely to do well in most specialties. Students with higher conscientiousness were more likely to be inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society, while students high in openness or agreeableness traits were more likely to be inducted into the Gold Humanism Honor Society.

Knipp, Lee and Elizabeth (2017) examined the relationships among personality traits, perception of workplace stress and coping mechanisms among experienced 50 US emergency department nurses (ED nurses). The findings revealed that Nurses who scored high in openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness utilized problem focused coping mechanisms. The ED nurses scored low at neuroticism domain because the personality domain of neuroticism is associated with an individual that is tense, irritable, shy, impulsive, vulnerable, and self-conscious. A personality like this would not be suitable for the ED as this type of personality may fail under the ED time and pressure constraints. This is why nurse participants scored the lowest in this personality domain.

2.3 Happiness related reviews

Jouybari, Sharifi, Sanagoo, Saeedi, Saeedi and Kalantari (2017) studied the Happiness and its related factors among 238Students in Golestan University of Medical Sciences Out of 238 students, 56.7% were female. Findings revealed significant relationship between age and happiness was significant. There were no significant relationships between happiness and the field of study, academic average, ethnicity, marital status, and students’ economic status. High happiness was found in the Laboratory Sciences students.

Rahighee (2015) evaluated happiness in nurses in a general hospital. Methods: In this descriptive cross-sectional study, the subjects included 73 randomly selected nurses at Said Sadoughi Hospital. Findings revealed that relationship between happiness and workplace was significant. Nurses were shown to have a good state of happiness while it was affected by their workplace as nurses of intensive units were less happy, that represents a possible impact of working place on the morale of nurses.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Sample

Present study was conducted on 80 medical professionals (doctors, nurses and pharmacists) of different government and private hospitals of Uttarakhand and Uttarpradesh. Participant’s age varying between 25 to 55 years.

3.2 Design

The present investigation was design in 2×2×2 factorial settings. Three independent and one dependent variable was used. The dependent variable was behavioral approach coping style. The independent variables: Gender, Happiness and Neuroticism were varied at two levels.

3.3 Tools used

- ✓ Oxford Happiness Questionnaire of Hills and Argyle M. (2002),
- ✓ NEO-five factor Inventory (NEO-FFI, 1992),
- ✓ Coping Scale (A. K. Srivastav; 2001).

3.4 Procedure

Participants were contacted personally and requested to respond on above mentioned measures. They were asked to read carefully the instructions given in the questionnaires. Participants were allowed to take their own time to complete the questionnaire. All above mentioned psychometric devices were simultaneously administered to the selected participants.

4. Results and Discussion

In order to study the effect of gender, gratitude and neuroticism on cognitive coping style mean and ANOVA were calculated. Sum, Mean scores and standard deviations are shown in Table No. 1. ANOVA is shown in Table No.2.

Table 1: Research paradigm with Sum of scores, Mean and Standard deviation on Cognitive Coping Style

		Male		Female		Σ
		Neuroticism		Neuroticism		
		High	Low	High	Low	
Happiness	High	SS- 636	SS- 787	SS- 665	SS- 687	2775
		M- 31.8	M- 39.35	M- 33.25	M- 34.35	
	S.D.- 5	S.D.- 6.6	S.D.- 4.4	S.D.- 2.5		
	Low	SS- 578	SS- 675	SS- 624	SS- 663	
	M- 28.9	M- 33.75	M- 31.2	M- 33.15		
	S.D.- 4.7	S.D.- 4.1	S.D.- 4.6	S.D.- 3		
Σ		1214	1462	1289	1350	5315

SS - Sum of scores, M - Mean, S.D. - Standard Deviation

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of Variance for Behavioral Coping Style

Source of variance	SS	df	MS	F
Happiness	345.16	1	345.16	16.84**
Neuroticism	596.76	1	596.76	29.11**
Sex	8.56	1	8.56	0.42
Happiness × Neuroticism	8.56	1	8.56	0.42
Happiness × Sex	68.91	1	68.91	3.36
Neuroticism × Sex	218.56	1	218.56	10.66**
Happiness × Neuroticism × Sex	31.48	1	31.48	1.54
Error	3115.35	152	20.5	
Total	4393.34	159		

**p < .01

F_{.05} (1, 152) = 3.91; F_{.01} (1, 152) = 6.81

Table-2 indicates that for:

- Equation (1) Happiness,
'F' value for 'Happiness' is $(1, 152) = 16.84$, $p < .01$ is highly significant.
- Equation (2) Neuroticism,
'F' value for 'Neuroticism' is $(1, 152) = 29.11$, $p < .01$ is also highly significant.
- Equation (3) Sex,
'F' value for 'Sex' $(1, 152) = 0.42$, $p > .05$ is insignificant.
- Equation (4) Happiness \times Neuroticism
The 'F' value for interaction effect of Happiness \times Neuroticism is $(1, 152) = 0.42$, $p > .05$ is insignificant
- Equation (5) Happiness \times Sex
'F' value for Happiness \times Sex is $(1, 152) = 3.3$, $p > .05$ is also insignificant
- Equation (6) Neuroticism \times Sex
'F' value for the interaction effect of Neuroticism \times Sex is $(1, 152) = 10.66$, $p < .01$ is significant
- Equation (7)
'F' value for the interaction effect of Happiness Neuroticism and Sex is $(1, 152) = 1.54$, $p > .05$ is not significant.

Coping with stress is considered as an effort by a person to manage and overcome demands and critical events that pose a challenge, threat, harm or loss to that person or the person's normal functioning.

Findings of the present study, shows that happiness is an influencing factor to affect the behavioral coping style. High level of happiness promotes approach behavioral coping in medical professionals. However, there is limited literature, available on relation between happiness and coping strategies. Some of the studies were done by various researchers as Donya Kiadaliri and Shahnam Abolghasemi (2016) found that approach coping styles were positively correlated with happiness and avoidance coping style had a negative correlation with happiness and Rim (1993) found that both happy men and women adopted more approach coping style. However some researchers found different results in their studies on happiness in correlation with age and gender. Carlos Salavera, Pablo Usan, Silvia Perez, Andrea Chato and Raquel Vera (2017) found that happiness reduced as age increased while Khodarahim (2014) found that males have high level of happiness in comparison to females, regardless of age but Shojaei et al. (2012) found no significant association between the level of happiness and gender of nursing staff.

The second finding of present study, shows that neuroticism is an independent influencing factor to affect the behavioral coping style and its interaction with gender promotes adoption of behavioral coping style more in female than male medical professionals whereas demotes adoption of behavioral coping style more in male than female medical professionals. Leonardo de Souza et.al (2014), Costa P.T. (1996), O'Brien T. B., (1996) found that Neuroticism influenced negatively the use of problem-focused strategies (behavioral approach), and positively emotion-focused coping (behavioral avoidance) in individuals with bipolar disorder. Igor kardum and Nada Krapic (2001) told that neuroticism and psychoticism have direct positive effects on avoidance coping style of early adolescence (11-14 years). Studies have shown individuals with neuroticism use passive coping (behavioral / cognitive avoidance) strategies but extravert individuals utilize active copings i.e. cognitive & behavioral approach (Vollrath M. et. al. (2000), Watson D. et.al (1996), Lee-Baggley et.al. (2005) , Parkes K.R. (1986), Bakker AB (2006) .

High neuroticism in individuals creates difficulty in coping the situation and to be adaptive in the environment. It can be elucidated that neuroticism has been associated with more subjective reports of stress symptoms and the occurrence of stressful life events (Magnus 1996, Ebstrup, 2011). Individuals with high neuroticism are susceptible to psychological helplessness and irrational thoughts and have less ability to control their impulses(Costa P.T., 1992) They have a tendency to experiencing negative emotions (McCrae RR, 1987) and, therefore, may be to direct their coping efforts toward managing those painful emotions (Lee-Baggley D, 2005) So, it is more possible that these individuals get involved in passive and maladaptive coping styles Behavioral / Cognitive avoidance (Vollrath M, 2000).

Malone L. D. (2010) and Bolger N. (1990) assume that coping styles can directly be derived from personality traits, indeed, coping is personality in action. So, it is supposed that personality traits may influence the effectiveness of coping styles. It means the styles that are useful for some individuals may be less effective or even harmful for individuals that have different personality traits (Bolger N., 1995, DeLongis A, 2005)). Effectiveness of coping refers to the usefulness degree of coping styles in reducing distress. It is the possibility that high-neuroticism individuals are emotionally more reactive because they choose passive (behavioral / cognitive avoidance) coping styles, or that they choose similar styles to those chosen by low-neuroticism individuals (behavioral approach coping) that they are ineffective at alleviating their distress (Bolger N., 1995, Hudek-Knezevic J,2005) and (Khokhar 2001). However, it is believed that deeper understanding of the role of personality in the coping process requires an assessment of personality traits and specific coping strategies, and use of laboratory and daily report studies (Connor-Smith JK, 2005) Farley, Tillman, Galves, Dickinson, Miriam, Diaz, Marie (2005), found that demographic characteristics, socio- cultural and regional background also have significant effect on coping strategies.

From the obtained results and discussion at above, it is clear that neuroticism is a significant variable to influence coping styles of medical professionals, but gender and happiness in interaction not influence the adoption of behavioral approach coping style in medical professionals and there is no interactional effects found here. Findings suggest that doctors called Healers also need counseling about their stress coping styles to lessen the adverse effects of stress.

5. Conclusions

The main findings related to behavioral approach coping style are summarized as follows:

- (1) Happiness promotes behavioral approach coping style in medical professionals.
- (2) Neuroticism, independent of gender demotes behavioral approach coping style in medical professionals.
- (3) Sex has not been found to play an important role on behavioral approach coping style of medical professionals, but its interaction with neuroticism, female in comparison to male medical professionals with high neuroticism adopt more behavioral approach coping style whereas male in comparison to female medical professionals with low neuroticism adopt more behavioral approach coping style.
- (4) Interactional effect of Happiness \times Neuroticism, Happiness \times Sex and Happiness \times Neuroticism \times Sex on behavioral approach coping style have not found to be significant at any acceptable level of confidence.

From above findings we can promote awareness in medical professionals through counseling and awareness camps that will help them to adopt positive coping styles and increase positivity (happiness) to manage their daily stresses and hassles and can make better living style and improve their personality also.

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