



Individual Differences between in Personality and Coping Style as Predictor of Anxiety in Tier 2 and Tier 3 Cities in India

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Abstract: The current study explored the relationship between personality, coping strategies and anxiety. A correlational study was employed with 50 participants diagnosed with anxiety belonging to 2 and Tier 3 cities of India. Findings indicate a significant positive correlation between anxiety and avoidance coping style ($r=.294$, $p=.038$). This suggests that as anxiety increases, there is a higher tendency to use avoidance-oriented coping mechanism. Anxiety was also found to be favorably correlated with neuroticism. Additionally, a strong positive correlation was found between conscientiousness and task-oriented coping, neuroticism and emotion focused coping, and openness and avoidance coping. The study therefore established the role played by personality traits and coping strategies in anxiety. The findings indicate that neuroticism is a risk factor for anxiety while conscientiousness is protective as individuals with conscientiousness are more likely to adapt task-oriented coping style. The result highlights the need for interventions focusing to enhance effective coping strategies and emotion regulation to reduce anxiety and enhance overall well-being.

Keywords: *Anxiety, Personality Traits, Coping Styles, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Avoidance Coping*

1. Introduction

People's thought, emotions, desires, attitude, and behavior vary from one context to another and in particular time. Yet each has some consistency and predictability that make individuals unique. Research define personality is defined by characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving (Revelle, 2007). It implies that personality encompasses almost everything humans do and feel every day and it has a significant impact on individual's levels of well-being. (Dreie, 2011). The most common approach to understanding personality is the Five-Factor Model. It focuses on five broad dimensions of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Studies have shown that of all personality traits, neuroticism is most strongly linked with various forms of anxiety, which makes it a re prime predictor of anxiety outcomes. People who consistently score high on neuroticism are more likely to develop anxiety problems due to their negative affective states, poor stress regulation mechanisms, and overall emotional instability (Costa and McCrae (1992). The idea that personality and anxiety have a bidirectional relationship is not new: it has been established by various research over time. However, the association between neuroticism and anxiety is so embedded in psychology that it continues to be the foundation of personality psychology and psychopathology research.

Researchers like Eysenck (1967) and Gray (1982) laid early groundwork for understanding how stable personality traits predispose individuals to emotional disorders. Additionally, cognitive-behavioral theories emphasize that personality traits affect how people perceive and understand stressors, which in turn influences their anxiety responses (Beck and Clark, 1997).

Yang et al. (2023) in a study of 536 Chinese college students identified neuroticism was the best indicator of anxiety & depression, emphasizing emotional instability as a significant risk factor for psychological distress.

Extraversion and conscientiousness, are negatively correlated with anxiety, probably because they are psychologically related to positive emotions, adaptive emotion regulation, and effective coping (John and Srivastava, 1999).

Vasudha (2025) investigation shows that among final-year students, neuroticism has a favorable correlation with career anxiety, while high levels of conscientiousness and social support are adversely correlated with anxiety during career transitions.

Individual's approaches to manage stress are called "coping styles." These styles are steady characteristics that affect how people react to stress and often remain constant and in many contexts (Algorani and Gupta, 2024). Coping scales assess the kind of coping strategy an individual use. Personality and coping style have a great influence on how an individual will responds to any stressful situation. Earlier research has indicated that traits such as conscientiousness and emotional stability, openness are positively associated with coping styles of problem-solving. Whereas Neuroticism is associated with maladaptive coping mechanisms such as emotional distress and avoidance (Watson and Hubbard, 1996).

Elias et al. (2025) in a study of 190 Indian young adult women, found that personality functioning and perceived stress significantly influence psychological well-being, highlighting the important role of personality and stress-related processes in understanding mental health among young adults. It was observed by Sharma and Sharma (2025). that emotionally stable and conscientious students at university were more likely to utilize effective methods of coping known as problem solving and emotional regulation. Conversely, avoidance and emotion-focused coping methods are more common among individual with neuroticism. These results unequivocally demonstrate the part of personality characteristics in determining the coping style among Indian university students. Devi et al. (2024) found that, Anxiety and personality traits are significantly associated with mind wandering among Indian adults, highlighting the influence of personality on cognitive processes.

Furthermore, Aniljose et al. (2025) study reveals a substantial positive relationship between nurses' death anxiety and personality characteristics indicating that personality traits influence emotional adjustment and well-being in stressful work context.

Modern psychology defines personality as an active, organized whole that functions within a framework of environmental, psychological, and biological processes. These systems collectively help to predict major life outcomes such as mental health, marital status, and work performance and explain why people behave differently. Since personality is not a fixed set of features but rather the result of interactions between traits, abilities, and circumstances, it should be measured using more than simply the Big Five Factors. This integrative paradigm describes the

dynamic interactions between characteristics, capacities, and settings over time and in changing circumstances. This demonstrates the need for further investigation (Alnafisah, 2026).

This integrative paradigm describes how personalities characteristics, capacities, and circumstances interact in a dynamic way over time. emphasizes the necessity of more investigation. Understanding the relationship can help plan mental health initiatives, resilience-building programs, and counseling strategies to improve adaptive coping and psychological well-being among the youth of India.

2. Methodology

2.1 Sample

50 participants with an anxiety diagnosis were chosen via purposeful sampling. All participants belonged to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in India. To make sure they were suitable and pertinent to the study's goals, participants were chosen using inclusion and exclusion criteria.

2.2 Inclusion Criteria

- a) Individuals aged between 19 and 65 years
- b) Individuals diagnosed with Anxiety
- c) Individuals belong to 2 and 3 Tier cities of India

2.3 Exclusion Criteria

- a) Individuals diagnosed with severe psychiatric or neurological disorders except anxiety
- b) Individuals currently undergoing intensive psychiatric treatment or hospitalization
- c) Participants unwilling to participate voluntarily in the study

2.4 Measures

Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A): - The Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) was developed by Hamilton and published in the British journal of Medical Psychology in 1959. It has been proved to have good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha varying from 0.77 to 0.92.

Coping Inventory for stressful Situations (CISS): - The Coping Inventory for Stressful situation (CISS) was developed by Endler and Parker in the late 1980s. It consists of 48 items which were grouped into three coping categories: Task-oriented (TO), Emotion-oriented (EO), and Avoidance-oriented (AO). The scale was found to have a good reliability with a correlation coefficient of 0.93.

NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI): - The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) was developed by Paul T Costa Jr and Robert R McCrae in 1992. It is a 60-item inventory based on the five-factor model of personality measuring neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. This inventory was found to have good reliability with internal consistency coefficients ranging from 0.68 to 0.86 and test-retest coefficients varying from 0.75 to 0.83. It was also found to have good construct validity with correlation coefficient ranging from 0.77 to 0.92 compared to the NEO personality Inventory.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

Pearson's correlation was employed in this study to investigate the association between participants' coping styles, personality traits, and anxiety.

2.6 Procedure

The current research investigates the relationship between personality traits and coping styles and anxiety in the sample of participants residing in the Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in India. The personality traits were measured using the self-reported NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), and the coping styles were evaluated using the coping Inventory for Stressful Situation (CISS). Both inventories were distributed via Google form, which included an informed consent. The anxiety levels of the participants were assessed using the Hamilton Anxiety Rating scale (HAM-A). Additionally, the correlations between all three variables were explored using the Pearson's correlation analysis in SPSS version 2.0 after completing the data collection.

3. Results

Table 1: Correlation between HAM-A and Coping Styles

	HAM-A	Task-oriented	Emotion-oriented	Avoidance-oriented
HAM-A	-			
Task-oriented	.21(.885)	-		
Emotion-oriented	.52(.719)	.317*(.25)	-	
Avoidance-oriented	.294*(.038)	.388**(.005)	.136(.347)	-

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 indicates that there is a positive relationship between anxiety and coping styles. Anxiety was positively associate with avoidance-oriented coping at the 5% level of significance,

indicating that individual with higher anxiety were more likely to use avoidance strategies. However, no significant relationship was found between anxiety and task-oriented or emotion-oriented coping. Furthermore, whereas emotion-oriented and avoidance-oriented coping were not substantially correlated, task-oriented coping was favorably correlated with emotion-oriented coping at the 5% level and with avoidance-oriented coping at the 1% level of significance.

The findings demonstrated a unique relationship between anxiety and avoidance coping, indicating that individuals with greater anxiety levels were more inclined to avoid stressful situations.

Task-oriented coping and emotion-oriented coping was not significantly linked with anxiety. The positive associations of task-oriented coping with both emotion-oriented and avoidance-oriented coping suggest that individuals tend to use multiple coping strategies, and that emotion-oriented and avoidance-oriented coping strategies seem to be independent of each other.

Table 2: *Correlation among Personality Traits and Coping Styles*

	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Task-Oriented	Emotion - Oriented	Avoidance-oriented
Neuroticism	-							
Extraversion	.077(.595)	-						
Openness	-.060(.677)	-.054(.709)	-					
Agreeableness	-.075(.606)	.285 ^{*(.045)}	-.225(.117)	-				
Conscientiousness	.068(.638)	.296 ^{*(.037)}	-.181(.208)	.375 ^{***(.007)}	-			
Task-Oriented	.077(.597)	.250(.080)	.093(.518)	.106(.464)	.450 ^{***(.001)}	-		
Emotion-Oriented	.412 ^{***(.003)}	-.021(.887)	-.213(.137)	-.022(.881)	.059(.683)	.317 ^{*(.025)}	-	
Avoidance-Coping	-.023(.872)	.010(.946)	.394 ^{***(.005)}	-.012(.932)	-.115(.428)	.388 ^{***(.005)}	.136(.347)	-

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 shows that there is relationship between coping styles and personality traits. neuroticism was positively correlated with emotion-oriented coping, openness with avoidance-oriented coping, and conscientiousness with task-oriented coping at the 1% level of significance. Additionally, agreeableness and conscientiousness were positively correlated with extraversion at the 5% level, whereas conscientiousness was favorably correlated with agreeableness.

Table 3: *Correlation between HAM-A and Personality Traits (NEO-FFI)*

	HAM-A	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
HAM-A	-					
Neuroticism	.989** (.000)	-				
Extraversion	-.263(.65)	-.279*(.050)	-			
Openness	.74(.611)	.065(.656)	-.054(.709)	-		
Agreeableness	-.071(.624)	-.085(.559)	.285*(.045)	.225(.117)	-	
Conscientiousness	.078(.589)	.031(.832)	.296*(.037)	-.181(.208)	.375**(.007)	-

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 reveals a substantial positive connection between the anxiety and neuroticism at the 1% level of significance, suggesting that increased anxiety was linked to increased neuroticism. At 5% level of significance substantial negative connection between neuroticism and extraversion. Extraversion. and conscientiousness were positively connected, while at the 5% level of significance, conscientiousness and agreeableness were favorably correlated.

4. Discussion

The present investigation was intended to investigate the association between anxiety, coping styles, and personality traits. among 50 participants across Tier 2 & Tier 3 cities of India with an anxiety diagnosis. The results indicated that anxiety tends to be interrelated with personality traits and coping styles. Three primary patterns emerge: anxiety was highly correlated with neuroticism, anxiety was associated with avoidance-oriented coping, and different personality traits were associated with different coping styles. The result demonstrates that neuroticism and anxiety were positively correlated, indicating that the more anxious participants scored higher on neuroticism. This is consistent with earlier research that revealed, neuroticism as the primary personality characteristic associated with anxiety, which is characterized by having strong emotions and sensitivity to anxiety (Costa and McCrae (1992), Singh (2023).

Kang et al. (2023) similarly found that high neuroticism is associated with anxiety, low mood, weak self-worth, and poorer wellbeing.

People high in neuroticism also tend to see unclear or difficult situations as threatening, which makes their anxiety worse (Beck and Clark (1997).

For young adults in this study, emotional sensitivity may be a major factor in their anxiety. This may be especially true for those living in smaller cities, where academic pressure, career

concerns, and a lack of mental health resources may contribute to stress. This is supported by studies of various Indian samples, where neuroticism consistently predicts maladaptive coping and anxiety Thumchuichan and Kapoor (2022).

The findings showed that avoidance coping and anxiety were positively correlated. There was no apparent association between anxiety and either task-oriented or emotion-oriented coping.

This study shows that more anxious people were more likely to avoid their problems instead of facing them. Avoidance gives a short respite, but the problem remains intact worsening the anxiety over time. This matches earlier research linking avoidance-based coping with greater emotional distress Watson and Hubbard (1996).

The connection between coping strategies and personality characteristics helps to explain these trends. Emotion-oriented coping and neuroticism were favorably correlated, indicating emotionally sensitive individuals are more likely to be emotionally preoccupied with their distress than problem-oriented.

The results are consistent with Lakhotia and Brahmabhatt (2025) study which reported that highly neurotic individuals are more inclined to deal with emotions using emotion-focused strategies, including seeking support and distraction, than to use problem-focused strategies. Contrary to this, there was no discernible link between avoidance-oriented coping and neuroticism in this study. The current findings are consistent with those from Boyes and French (2012) who showed that neuroticism alone does not predict avoidance? How people see a situation, including stress levels and resources, and the amount of social support they receive, affect response.

Conscientiousness was positively associated with task-oriented coping, which makes sense, as someone high in Conscientiousness is well-organized, focused, and goal-directed. This is indeed the same trend reported by Tanksale (2015). These connections support the idea that personality shapes the coping strategies a person relies on, and that adaptive traits such as conscientiousness encourage problem-focused responses (Sharma & Sharma, 2025).

Openness was positively correlated with avoidance-oriented coping, a less consistent finding, though this finding may reflect a tendency to seek alternatives and distractions when under stress. John and Srivastava (1999). These findings are also consistent with the study Personality is the interaction between traits, abilities, and situations (Alnafisah, 2026).

A clear picture emerges neuroticism is tied to higher anxiety and emotion-focused coping, while conscientiousness is tied to the more helpful, task-focused approach stress.

Extraversion was positively correlated with agreeableness and negatively correlated with neuroticism while conscientiousness was positively correlated with agreeableness. Collectively these traits represent an effective set of coping mechanisms for individuals with low levels of neuroticism, as the combination of these traits promotes overall wellbeing (John & Srivastava, 1999).

5. Conclusion

To conclude, one can state that personality traits and coping styles have a significant influence on anxiety levels, how anxiety is perceived and dealt with. It was found that individuals who score high on neuroticism are more likely prone to anxiety and those who employ avoidant coping mechanisms have a harder time coping with anxiety-inducing situations. Conscientiousness was found to help individuals in using task-oriented coping to deal with stress. These conclusions have important significance that Avoidance coping style and Neuroticism are found to be useful therapeutic targets. Counselling and resilience enhancing programmes in the researched cities might emphasize on improving task-oriented coping mechanisms, reducing the use of avoidant coping strategies and enhancing emotion regulation strategies specifically for individuals high on neuroticism. Further research may benefit from larger representative sample and longitudinal design and in addition, future research could also consider examining the influence of protective factors, such as social support, on the levels of anxiety, as prior research has shown social support to be a key factor in reducing the impact of stress.

5.1 Limitations

It is crucial to mention certain limitation of the study. The sample size was relatively small (N=50) and used the purposive sampling, that limits the generalizability of the results. Additionally, factors such as income, family dynamics, and professional help accessibility were not accounted for, although they could significantly affect the anxiety levels.

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