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## **A Comparative Study on Core Self-Evaluation, Personality & Coping Among College Students & Working Professionals**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Academic labour can consume a person's entire day, and in modern professions, there is frequently little distinction between personal and professional time. A student is someone who is actively learning or developing abilities that they will utilize in their profession in the future. On the other hand, a worker is a part of the production process. Self-development in the form of understanding their fundamental attributes, personality and defence mechanisms is essential for one's growth and development. Individuals can objectively evaluate their strengths and areas they need to improve in if they have a solid understanding of their core-self evaluations, personality traits, and coping abilities. One is more likely to feel fulfilled in their personal lives by enabling themselves to investigate important areas of self-improvement which in turn could help them professionally. The aim of the current research is to study the effects of core self-evaluation, personality and coping in college students and working professionals. Standardized scales were used to measure the variables. A total of 40 college students falling in the age category 18-25 years and 40 working professionals belonging to the age group 20-40 years participated in the study. The results found out that core self-evaluation is positively correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism while there is no correlation between coping and core self-evaluation and personality. No significant difference could be drawn between students and working professionals in core self-evaluation, personality and coping. Therefore, aiding individuals in gaining more knowledge about how CSE, personality, and coping shape a person can benefit the forthcoming generation to understand what aspects can help them develop successful career and personal growth plans.

**KEYWORDS:** Core self-evaluation, personality, coping, college students, working professionals

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### **INTRODUCTION**

"Our feelings and emotions are our hurdles, hindrances, and those are the hardest things to master in oneself because we are thinking about them and getting impacted and when you do not think about them you are free from such things in your mind. So, learning to think what not to think is an ability we need to develop to rise above those things." – Aiyaz Uddin

Many people find it difficult to strike a balance in life, but for college students and working professionals, a lack of balance can become overwhelming if healthy living and wellness aren't taken into account in the overall equation of their life. Finding ways to escape the daily grind will make it easier to work more effectively, and in order to achieve this balance, one must work on their personal growth, which is essential in enhancing one's core attributes and beliefs. Additionally, it aids in personal grooming and enhancement, transforming people into better and more effective resources for themselves. Self-development, which is a true expression of an individual's inner essence, should begin early in life. Self-improvement training is crucial in both academic and workplace settings because it affects how a person interacts with his co-workers and peers and reacts to different circumstances. It lowers stress levels and teaches one to smile even in the worst of circumstances. Although achieving this balance can be difficult, the benefits it has on a person's general health and well-being make the effort worthwhile.

The term "Core Self-Evaluations" (CSE) refers to the instant assessments we all have about who we are and how our lives are going. CSE directly influence our performance on our tasks and our attitude about our work. They can also help us see ourselves more clearly so that we can "play to our strengths." People with high core self-evaluations will have positive opinions of themselves and be self-assured of their skills. On the contrary, people with low core self-evaluations, will have a poor opinion of themselves and lack confidence. The core self-evaluation process produces a "virtuous cycle" at its best. A person will feel more in charge and perceive themselves as more valuable and deserving if they can enhance their CSE. The fact that core self-evaluations indicate a personality trait that will last across time makes them particularly significant. The Latin word "persona" (from which the English word "personality" is derived) describes a theatrical mask used by actors to either project multiple roles or conceal their identity. At its most fundamental level, personality refers to the distinctive thought, feeling, and behaviour patterns that define a person. It is thought that a person's personality develops from within and largely holds true throughout their lifetime. Both CSE and Personality along with coping play independent and interactive roles in influencing physical and mental health. Coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the face of stress and/or trauma to help manage and minimise painful, unpleasant or difficult emotions. People use coping strategies to cope with difficult situations and preserve their emotional health and well-being.

According to Judge (2009), people with high CSE levels perform better at work, have greater career success, enjoy their jobs and lives more, experience less stress and conflict, are better able to deal with disappointments, and take advantage of opportunities and benefits. A study by Lounsbury et al. (2005) showed that in accordance with the big five traits, the personality of students while in college and how happy they are with various parts of their college experience may be significantly impacted by who they were before entering college. According to research by Labrague et al. (2016) nursing students frequently use problem-solving techniques including creating goals to address difficulties, implementing different techniques to solve problems, and deciphering the significance of upsetting occurrences as coping mechanisms. Another study by Welbourne et al. (2007) showed that Positive occupational attributional style was linked to increased problem-solving and cognitive restructuring coping ability and reduced use of avoidance coping in the management of work-related stress. Hence there is a need for growing understanding of how CSE, personality and coping shape individuals and how these factors can be incorporated to help students and professionals to make effective career and personal growth plans.

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## CORE SELF-EVALUATION

The idea of core self-evaluations was first proposed by Judge et al. (1997) in an effort to identify a characteristic that might be a valuable predictor of job satisfaction along with other applied criteria. According to Judge et al. (1997) the concept of core self-evaluation is described as “how individuals evaluate themselves, their attitude towards the environment and situations they find themselves in, as well as how they perceive their self-esteem and competences.” These four areas are not interchangeable; each makes a unique contribution to the overall evaluation of the person. It was demonstrated that this psychological construct, which represents a considerable relationship between personality qualities and pleasures, motivation, and stress, is extremely potent and constant (Ferris et al., 2011).

More than a decade ago, Judge, Locke, and Durham (1997) postulated a higher-order personality construct and gave it the label ‘core self-evaluations’ (CSE). Core self-evaluation can be defined as “the fundamental appraisals that people hold, that affect the evaluation of specific situations and reflect a baseline appraisal implicit in all other beliefs and evaluations” (Packer, 1985).

According to Chang et al. (2012) core self-evaluation (CSE) represents “the fundamental appraisals individuals make about their self-worth and capabilities. It represents a stable personality construct, including individual subconsciousness and evaluation of one’s own abilities and self-control”. Self-efficacy, locus of control, emotional stability, and self-esteem are the four personality traits included in CSE.

Simsek et al. (2009) found that CEOs whose personas reflect higher core self-evaluations have a more positive influence on their firms' entrepreneurial attitude, this is particularly true for companies that operate in a dynamic environment. Similarly, a study by Farčić et al. (2020) revealed that overall core self-evaluation and nurses' clinical decision-making are significantly positively correlated, and self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control significantly influence all aspects of clinical decision-making, particularly when it comes to outlining goals and values. Low CSE can make nurses more susceptible to risk aversion, whereas high CSE foster healthy self-views and confidence.

A study by Xiang et al. (2019) showed that malicious and benign envy performed roles in mitigating the unfavourable link between core self-evaluation and mental health symptoms.

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## PERSONALITY

According to Funder (2004), personality refers to “an individual’s characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour, together with the psychological mechanisms – hidden or not – behind those patterns.” A year later, Larsen & Buss (2005) defined personality as “a set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively enduring and that influence his or her interactions with, and adaptations to, the intrapsychic, physical, and social environments.”

A study by Malkoç (2011) found that substantial roles are played by personality characteristics and coping mechanisms in understanding subjective well-being. According to the study, extraversion, conscientiousness, and self-confident coping styles were favourable predictors of subjective well-being while neuroticism and a helpless coping style were negative predictors.

Ash et al. (2006) showed that everything that occurs during a person's career is influenced by personality, which also helps us comprehend work motivation, job attitudes, citizenship behaviour, leadership, teamwork, well-being, and organisational culture. Additionally, he demonstrated how personality influences who gets hired and fired.

Zacher’s (2014) study found that Beyond the Big Five personality traits, career flexibility and fundamental self-evaluations, career satisfaction and self-rated career performance were positively correlated. Additionally, the two indices of subjective professional success were positively predicted by both concern and confidence.

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## COPING

According to Dantzer (1989) coping can be understood as “if a stressor elicits a physiological reaction A and if, in an individual engaged in a specific behavioural response, the observed physiological reaction is B, such as  $B < A$ , then by definition the response displayed by the subject is a coping response.”

Schouten and Wiepkema (1991) consider coping as “the individual response to a stressor by which normally harmful physiological effects of this stressor are reduced”.

Fraser and Broom (1990) published a definition of coping that goes beyond a causal explanation of how coping responses affect physiological measurements of stress. In one of their books, they explained 'cope' in the following terms: "Have control of mental and bodily stability. This control may be short-lived or prolonged. Failure to be in control of mental and bodily stability leads to reduced fitness" (Fraser & Broom., 1991). Their definition places a focus on the practical effects of coping strategies and links the idea of coping not just to the idea of stress but also, and more broadly, to the idea of behavioural adaptation.

A study by Straud (2015) indicated that proactive and preventive coping were substantially connected with all five personality traits. Additionally, while Extraversion and Neuroticism were solely predictive of proactive coping, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience predicted both kinds of coping.

Låstad's (2013) study showed that emotion-focused coping was not positively correlated with core self-evaluations while problem-focused coping was. However, coping style had no mediation impact on the relationship between core self-evaluations and job insecurity.

Struthers et al. (2000) found that in comparison to students who used emotion-focused coping, students who used problem-focused coping were more likely to be motivated and do better in terms of handling academic stress and lower course grades.

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## PURPOSE

The purpose is to study core self-evaluation, personality and coping among college students and working professionals.

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## HYPOTHESIS

- There will be a positive correlation between core self-evaluation and personality traits.
- There will be a positive correlation between core self-evaluation and coping.
- There will be no difference between students and working professionals in core self-evaluation, personality and coping.

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## METHOD

### SAMPLE

A total of 80 people participated in the study from across Mumbai and Delhi, of which 40 were college students and 40 were working professionals. The age of the subjects belonging to the college group ranges from 18 to 25 years and the working group ranges from 20 to 40 years.

### MEASURES

- **Big Five Inventory - 10 (BFI - 10):** BFI-10 as given by Rammstedt & John (2007) consists of 10 questions, each rated on a five-point Likert scale wherein the subjects choose from options ranging from "disagree strongly" to "agree strongly." The instrument was used to measure the big five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness).
- **Core Self-Evaluations Scale (CSES):** CSES developed by Judge, Erez, Bono, and Thoresen (2003) consists of 12 items used to measure a single factor that is the communality of self-esteem, locus of control, generalized self-efficacy, and emotional stability. The items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."
- **Coping Scale:** Given by Hamby, Grych & Banyard (2013) this scale is a 13-item questionnaire rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from "mostly true about me" to "not true about me." This scale was used to assess behavioral, emotional and cognitive methods of dealing with concerns.

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## PROCEDURE

Standardized Psychological Tests were administered to the participants. All the participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google forms. All the participants were thanked for their contribution to the study.

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## ANALYSIS OF DATA

### 1.1 RESULTS

**Table 1: Showing N, mean and SD**

|   | Extraversion | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Neuroticism | Openness to Experience | Core self-evaluation | Coping |
|---|--------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| N | 80           | 80            | 80                | 80          | 80                     | 80                   | 80     |

**Table 1: Showing N, mean and SD**

|                    | Extraversion | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Neuroticism | Openness to Experience | Core self-evaluation | Coping |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| Mean               | 5.67         | 7.47          | 6.65              | 5.58        | 7.08                   | 38.0                 | 36.6   |
| Standard deviation | 1.83         | 1.60          | 1.74              | 1.91        | 1.57                   | 7.56                 | 6.78   |

**Table 2: Showing correlation of all variables**

|                        | Extraversion | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Neuroticism | Openness to Experience | Core self-evaluation | Coping |
|------------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| Extraversion           | —            |               |                   |             |                        |                      |        |
| Agreeableness          | 0.097        | —             |                   |             |                        |                      |        |
| Conscientiousness      | 0.131        | 0.348 **      | —                 |             |                        |                      |        |
| Neuroticism            | 0.115        | -0.066        | 0.210             | —           |                        |                      |        |
| Openness to Experience | 0.128        | 0.036         | 0.075             | -0.184      | —                      |                      |        |
| Core self-evaluation   | 0.339 **     | 0.290 **      | 0.575 ***         | 0.430 ***   | 0.005                  | —                    |        |
| Coping                 | 0.040        | -0.080        | 0.006             | 0.202       | -0.086                 | 0.116                | —      |

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 3: T-statistics of groups**

|                        | Group   | N  | Mean  | SD   | T-Stats |
|------------------------|---------|----|-------|------|---------|
| Extraversion           | Student | 40 | 5.33  | 1.58 | 0.088   |
|                        | Work    | 40 | 6.03  | 2.02 |         |
| Agreeableness          | Student | 40 | 7.42  | 1.58 | 0.782   |
|                        | Work    | 40 | 7.53  | 1.63 |         |
| Conscientiousness      | Student | 40 | 6.38  | 1.64 | 0.158   |
|                        | Work    | 40 | 6.92  | 1.80 |         |
| Neuroticism            | Student | 40 | 5.50  | 2.09 | 0.728   |
|                        | Work    | 40 | 5.65  | 1.75 |         |
| Openness to Experience | Student | 40 | 7.33  | 1.72 | 0.154   |
|                        | Work    | 40 | 6.83  | 1.38 |         |
| Core self-evaluations  | Student | 40 | 36.90 | 7.04 | 0.180   |
|                        | Work    | 40 | 39.17 | 7.98 |         |
| Coping                 | Student | 40 | 37.02 | 7.05 | 0.545   |
|                        | Work    | 40 | 36.10 | 6.56 |         |

## 1.1 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results found that Conscientiousness is significantly positively correlated with Agreeableness ( $r=0.348$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Core self-evaluation is significantly positively correlated with Extraversion ( $r=0.339$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Agreeableness ( $r=0.290$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Conscientiousness ( $r=0.575$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Neuroticism ( $r=0.430$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, the results also showed that there is no significant correlation between Coping & Personality traits and Coping & Core self-evaluation. Furthermore, the results also found there was no significant difference between students and working professionals in personality, core self-evaluation and coping. A study by Sevilla (2014) showed that extraversion moderated the relationship between core self-evaluation and satisfaction at work place. Another study by Shen et al. (2021) found that there is a positive relation between core self-evaluation and career pursuit where both core self-evaluation and career pursuit negatively predict decision making ability in career. Additionally, Chowdhury et al. (2006) showed that when high conscientiousness and high agreeableness characteristics interact, it leads to better performance of students in their tasks.

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## CONCLUSION

The current study comprehends the effects of core self-evaluation, personality and coping among college students and working professionals the results of which found out that core self-evaluation positively correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism while no correlation was found between coping and core self-evaluation and personality. The study also revealed there was no significant difference between students and working professionals in core self-evaluation, personality and coping. Results from this study can be used to incorporate more sophisticated approaches to train students and professionals to build better future goals and career expansions. Various approaches can be adopted by individuals and organizations to enhance achievement and motivation so as to maintain a balance in life as well as effectively cope with work overload and burden. Even if stressors in life are unavoidable and not always negative, it's still necessary for people to discover constructive strategies to deal with them which can be by expanding one's perspective and world view as well as spending time to look into their own intrinsic factors and work on its betterment.

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