

# The Relationship Between Defensive Styles and Coping Strategies Among Adolescence

Rushikesh Ingulkar<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Ramdas Kolekar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, MES Abasaheb Garware College

<sup>2</sup>Assistant professor, SP College, Pune

## Abstract

Only a limited amount of research has considered both defense mechanisms and coping techniques. The majority of previous studies have focused solely on one of these aspects. This particular study aims to explore the variations in coping mechanisms and defense systems among individuals of different age groups. The study specifically includes participants aged between 18 and 30 years old. The primary objective of this research is to analyze coping mechanisms and defense methods during early adulthood. By doing so, we can gain insights into individuals' cognitive processes, which subsequently impact their emotions and behavior. Furthermore, this study also aims to examine how different coping mechanisms and defense mechanisms align with various stages of life. The findings from this research will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of various aspects of early adulthood. For the current research Defense Style Questionnaire 40 (DSQ 40) and The Coping Scale Questionnaire these tests were used for measuring the defense styles and coping strategies among the adulthood. Google forms were circulated for collecting the data and SPSS version 22 software was used for statistical analysis. The findings suggest that defense style and coping strategies do not exhibit a statistically significant correlation.

**Keywords:** Defense Mechanisms, Coping Strategies, Adulthood, Coping Styles.

## Introduction

People frequently encounter situations that result in unpleasant emotions and a negative self-perception. Various theories have been developed to explain how individuals respond to these circumstances, encompassing both conscious and unconscious actions, as well as the mechanisms that regulate emotions. Defense mechanisms and coping strategies have been the primary focus of researchers and practitioners in this field. Although both defenses and coping mechanisms aid individuals in managing adverse situations, it remains uncertain whether these strategies are interconnected or distinct phenomena. The 4th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders considers coping and defense mechanisms to be interchangeable within a psychiatric context.

However, the two ideas have developed separately, and the advancements in one area are disregarded by the other. Although theoretical and empirical investigations have examined the link between coping and defenses, a definitive conclusion about whether they are independent or non-independent constructs yet to be reached.

Defense mechanisms: Sigmund Freud, in 1904 first used the term 'defense mechanism'. According to Freud, when id is in serious conflict with ego and super ego, the individual suffer from tension and anxiety. Defense mechanism enables a person to resolve conflict and reduce the stress and anxiety. Usually, all

defense mechanisms are operated at unconscious level. Most of defense mechanisms are self deceptive. In Freudian psychoanalytical theory, defense mechanisms are psychological strategies brought into play by the unconscious mind to manipulate, deny or distort reality in order to defend against feelings of anxiety and unacceptable impulses to maintain one's self schema.

**Coping:** According to APA, "Coping means the use of cognitive and behavioral strategies to manage the demands of a situation or to reduce the negative emotions and conflicts caused by stress." The term 'coping' was firstly originated in the social cognitive theory of stress elaborated in 1966 by Lazarus.

**Defense mechanisms:** According to APA, "Defense mechanism is a pattern of adjustment through which an individual relieves anxiety caused by an uncomfortable situation that threaten self- esteem."

"Defense mechanisms are the strategies adapted by the mind to protect a person against unwanted or unpleasant thoughts which they would face difficulties coping with."

**Coping strategies:** According to Skinner, Edge, Altman and Sherwood,(2003), " an organizational construct used to encompass the myriad actions individuals use to deal with stressful experiences," "Coping strategy is an action or a series of actions, or a thought process used in meeting a stressful or unpleasant situation or in modifying one's reaction to such a situation."

**Early adulthood:** The early adult years are a very varied time in life. It includes a broad spectrum of lifestyle options and obligations. While some people reach adulthood at the legal age of 18, others follow a considerably longer path. Many young people now have the chance to experience a longer transition from adolescence to adulthood—sometimes referred to as "emerging adulthood"—which can extend into their mid-30s—thanks to our industrialized culture.

There are many common areas of growth and development that take place in young adulthood, but there is too much variability in this stage of life to cover all of it here. One may argue that young adults change and make more choices than any other stage of life. As the young adult develops, concerns about work, family, housing, lifestyle, values, and connections to culture and politics cause them to struggle.

## Review of Literature

Coping and defending: age differences in maturity of defense mechanisms and coping strategies.

The research is conducted by Monica T. Whitty. She examined the age differences in the type of defense mechanisms and coping strategies that people employ. Gender differences, personality and environmental variables were also included. Three age groups were used in the study; they were 17 to 23 years, 40 to 47 years and 63 to 70 years. The investigation was carried out using a cross sectional design with three age groups and equal numbers of men and women. Defense style questionnaire (DSQ) devised by Andrews, Pollack & Stewart (1989) and the ways of coping questionnaire (WCQ) developed by Folkman & Lazarus (1988) were administered to all respondents. Along with this, the daily hassels questionnaire developed by Kanner (1981), The purpose in life test (PIL) developed by Crambaugh (1968), The self esteem scale developed by Rosenberg (1962) and Rotter's inventory (1966) to measure locus of control were also administered.

Coping and defense mechanisms; what are we assessing

The research was conducted by Laurentiu P. Maricutoiu and Danut I. Crasovan. The gap between theoretical considerations and empirical data about the connections between defense mechanisms and coping techniques is the subject of the current research project. Self-reported coping and defense measures were given to a sample of adult Romanians (N =542; 74.53% female, mean age = 31.28). Models that believed defenses and coping were independent of one another were compared to models that suggested

linkages existed between the two ideas using structural equation modeling. The results showed a high degree of common variance between the two concepts, suggesting a strong link between coping and defenses. Additionally, the findings showed that defenses and coping may be divided into two distinct categories of adaptation processes. The study's findings revealed that common adaptation processes include defenses and coping mechanisms.

### **Statement of the Problem**

“To study the correlation between defense style and coping strategies in the peoples in early adulthood.”

### **Objectives of Study**

- To study the defense style and coping strategies in people who are in their early adulthood
- To study the relationship between defense styles and coping strategies in early adulthood.
- To study the difference between defense mechanisms and coping strategies.

### **Hypothesis**

1. The people who score high on defense style will also score high in coping strategies. (Positive correlation between the variables.)
2. People who score high on defense style scores less on coping strategies. (Negative correlation between the variables.)
3. There is no significant relationship between defense styles and coping strategies.

### **Significance of Study**

According to Cramer, “Defense mechanisms – i.e., mental mechanisms that alter veridical perception – [are] postulated to function so as to protect the person from excessive anxiety, whether the source of that anxiety be the perception of a disturbing external event or the presence of a disruptive internal psychological state” and “coping as overt and covert behaviors that are taken to reduce or eliminate psychological distress or stressful conditions”. There was a need to find the direction, the form and the degree of the relationship between defense style and coping strategies.

### **Variable**

Independent Variables: 1) People in Early Adulthood

Dependent Variables: 1) Defense Styles, 2) Coping Strategies

### **Sample**

The sample of the study was 50 individuals and the age group was between 18 to 30 years, covering the population of people in the early adulthood. All individuals were of Indian nationality. Sample consisted of people from different educational background. Some were student pursuing their under graduation, post graduation, while some were employed in the MNCs or in government sector. All the samples has the same socio - economic status.

### **Psychometric Tools**

#### **A) Defense Style Questionnaire 40 (DSQ 40) :-**

Devised by Andrews, Pollack & Stewart (1989) will be employed to measure the defense mechanisms

proposed by Vaillant. The short version, consisting of 40 items will be used in this study. The short DSQ emphasizes the mature and immature factors at the expense of the neurotic factor. The reliability for the test was 0.70, 0.61, and 0.83, respectively. Additionally, results revealed that the 3 defense styles had acceptable split-half reliability and test-retest reliability coefficients.

**B) The Coping Scale Questionnaire:-**

By Homby, Grych, and Banyard, 2003. partially adopted from : Holahan and Moos, 1987; Spitzberg and Copach, 2008. This coping questionnaire evaluates behavioral, emotional, and cognitive coping strategies. The reliability for the test was 0.88 and 0.91, respectively.

**Procedure**

For data collection, google forms were circulated. The questionnaire was created by typing the two tests with items of all tests in the original order. The questionnaire was provided with precise instructions to be followed by the participants while filling. They were also informed that the test results would be kept confidential and would be used for educational and research purpose only. The data sheets were then scored by the researcher and the scores obtained were put on an excel sheet for further analysis.

**Results & Discussions**

**Table A showing the Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis for Defence style and Coping strategy. (N = 50)**

N	AGE	GENDER	DEFENCE	COPING
	50	50	50	50
MEAN	22.24	1.50	233.40	22.72
MEDIAN	22.00	1.50	226.00	21.00
MODE	22	1	193	17
STANDARD DEVIATION	2.796	.505	56.167	7.157
MINIMUM	18	1	123	12
MAXIMUM	28	2	352	40

Table A shows the descriptive statistics of the study. The mean values for defense styles and coping strategies are 233.40 and 22.72. Median values for defense style and coping strategies is 226.00 and 21.00. Standard deviation for both defense style and coping strategies is 56.167 and 7.157 respectively.

**Table B showing the correlation between Defense style and Coping strategies using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation. (N =50)**

		Defence	Coping
Defence	Pearson Correlation	1	.102
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.481
	N	50	50
Coping	Pearson Correlation	.102	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.481	
	N	50	50

Table B. Shows the inferential statistics of the research. Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation was used

to find out the correlation between the two variables i.e. defense styles and coping strategies.

According to values given in the table above, It is found that there is moderate positive correlation between the two variables.

(Hence, first hypothesis is accepted.)

The value of Pearson's correlation is .102, therefore there is no negative correlation between the variables.

(Hence, second hypothesis is rejected.)

As the  $p$  value is greater than that of the level of significance at 0.05, there is no statistically significant correlation between defence style and coping strategies.

(Hence, the third hypothesis is accepted.)

The goal of the study was to analyze the relationship between defense style and coping strategies. This correlation study focuses on defense styles and coping strategies. The sample of 50 individuals was taken from across the state of Maharashtra. The age group of the study was from 18 to 30 years. Sample consists of an equal ratio of male and female participants. Table shows the inferential statistics of the research. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to find out the correlation between the two variables i.e. defense styles and coping strategies. According to the values, It is found that there is moderate positive correlation between the two variables. Hence, first hypothesis "The people who score high on defense style will also score high in coping strategies" is accepted.

The value of Pearson's correlation is .102, therefore there is no negative correlation between the variables.

Hence, second hypothesis "People who score high on defense style scores less on coping strategies" is rejected.

As the  $p$  value is greater than that of the level of significance at 0.05, there is no statistically significant correlation between defense style and coping strategies. Hence, the third hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between defense styles and coping strategies" is accepted.

## Conclusion

The research centered on individuals in the early stages of adulthood. It aimed to determine the relationship between defense style and coping strategies. The findings suggest that defense style and coping strategies do not exhibit a statistically significant correlation.

## Limitations

1. The data was collected randomly and not at a particular time.
2. Data was collected by the online method of google forms.
3. Data was collected from the geographical region of Maharashtra only.

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