

# PERSONALITY AND COPING STYLES TO STRESS: THEIR COMBINED AND INDIVIDUAL EFFECTS ON WORK ADJUSTMENT.

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## Abstract

The study examines how personality traits, stress-coping styles, and workplace adaptation interact to influence organizational performance. Using a sample of 1,365 employees, the NEO Five-Factor Inventory Short Form (NEO-FFI) and the Coping Strategies Questionnaire (CAE) were administered. Through Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis, a significant association was identified between the trait Conscientiousness and problem-solving-focused coping ( $\rho = .518$ ), indicating that individuals with higher levels of discipline and organization manage stress more effectively. Moreover, profiles exhibiting high workplace adaptation were characterized by elevated scores in Conscientiousness and emotional stability, along with reduced use of dysfunctional strategies. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating personality and coping assessments into personnel selection and development, as well as of promoting training in problem-solving and emotional-regulation skills.

**Keywords:** Five-Factor model; Coping Strategies Questionnaire; Workplace adaptation; Organizational performance.

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## INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive and demanding work environment, understanding which factors affect adaptation and job performance becomes a valuable variable in people management.

Tokumitsu et al. (2023) highlight that there are personality traits that strongly influence adaptation to change, job performance and professional growth. In this context, personality can be affected in the face of stress, and also the differences between each individual's approach to stress can help us to understand why some people are more resilient and others are more vulnerable to the effects of stress (Ringwald et al., 2024).

Personality has been studied from multiple theoretical approaches, one of the most recognized being the Five-Factor Model (FFM) proposed by McCrae and Costa. According to Varo et al. (2023), this theory is one of the most accepted, considering dimensions such as neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (Angelini, 2023).

On the other hand, the demands of work itself can trigger crises or episodes of stress on a daily basis. According to Alfonso et al. (2019), stress is manifested as: "The cascade of biological events that occur when an organism faces a challenge outside the normal range and attempts to restore physiological balance". Nevertheless, some people manage to cope with it with greater or lesser success. From this approach, which is of interest for

research in work psychology and organizational behavior, a starting point for its understanding is generated, providing valuable information to improve work environments and strengthen individual and group effectiveness at work.

Personality traits directly influence the decisions we make and on the other hand the styles of coping with stress indicate the adaptive behaviors that we present before these events. Neuroticism has been associated with the experience of negative emotions in stressful situations (Crnković et al., 2023). In contrast, extraversion is linked to high sociability, positive emotionality, and effective communication, facilitating social interaction and interpersonal support (Varo et al., 2023). Openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness have been shown to facilitate coping, positive relationships, and job stability, with problem-focused coping common in proactive youth in the face of stress (Lek Chin, Anak Labent, Wong Xin Lin, & Leng Chan, 2024).

However, alteration in personality traits is associated with the emergence of disorders such as: antisocial, borderline and narcissistic. Moreover, according to Enns et al. (2018), stress plays an important role in the predisposition to depression, anxiety and the occurrence of suicidal thoughts, so it is of great importance to study the relationship of personality and psychological well-being in the occupational field.

Each of these mentioned traits significantly influences how individuals cope with stress, as indicated by Tokumitsu et al. (2023). Stress coping is closely related to psychological defense mechanisms, which include seeking emotional support, as argued by Yilmazturk et al. (2023). These mechanisms allow predicting the reaction and style with which individuals handle stressful situations, such as problem-solving focus, negative self-focus, positive reappraisal, overt emotional expression, avoidance, social support seeking, and religion. In addition, sociodemographic factors such as gender, age, marital status, location and type of work should not be overlooked. In this regard, Jun et al. (2019) note that "coping strategies appear to be an important factor in mediating the relationship between work-related stress and mental health". Understanding this relationship is crucial for organizations and human resource professionals, as it allows them to design interventions, procedures, and development programs that support greater work adjustment and well-being among their employees.

Raghuvanshi & Srivastava (2025) suggest that traits such as honesty, emotionality, kindness, and responsibility could be linked to coping strategies such as cognitive reappraisal and problem-focused coping, while emotional regulation does not present a clear relationship.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the joint and individual influence of personality traits and coping styles on stress, and how this impacts on work adjustment. It also seeks to identify which factors within these variables are significantly associated with high rates of work adaptation, in order to contribute to the processes related to people management within organizations.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was framed within a quantitative correlational approach, since it allowed describing and characterizing personality traits and coping styles (Domínguez, 2015; Hernández et al., 2014). A non-experimental and cross-sectional design was used, with data collection at a single time point (Domínguez, 2015).

The sample consisted of 1347 participants, with a non-probabilistic purposive sampling by convenience, considering the following inclusion criteria: Individuals over 18 years of age who, at the time of data collection, were actively engaged in a work activity, either through face-to-face or teleworking modality. Likewise, only those individuals who had basic access to technological resources were included, a necessary condition to complete the instruments applied in digital format. Participation was voluntary and was guaranteed by the inclusion of a section on informed consent to participate in the study freely and voluntarily, in accordance with the ethical principles of research in the social and behavioral sciences.

## INSTRUMENTS

### NEO FIVE-FACTOR INVENTORY SHORT FORM (NEO-FFI; COSTA & MCCRAE)

It consists of 60 items distributed in five personality factors:

Neuroticism (N)

Extraversion (E)

Openness to experience (O)

Agreeableness or friendliness (A)

Conscientiousness (C)

Scoring is done on a five-point Likert scale (0 = total disagreement; 4 = total agreement).

THE COPING STRATEGIES QUESTIONNAIRE (CAE; BONIFACIO & CHOROT, 2003):  
IT MEASURES SEVEN COPING STRATEGIES THROUGH 42 ITEMS:

Problem-Solving Focus (PSF)

Negative Self Focus (NSF)

Positive Reappraisal (PR)

Open Emotional Expression (OEE)

Avoidance (AV)

Seeking Social Support (SSS)

Religious Coping (RC)

Scoring is done on a five-point Likert scale (0 = never; 4 = almost always).

PROCEDURE

Data were collected through the distribution of an online form elaborated in Google Forms, which included an informed consent section, where participants voluntarily accepted to be part of the study. The instrument incorporated items corresponding to the scales measuring personality, coping styles and level of work adaptation. The confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided was guaranteed at all times,

Correlations		PSF	NSF	PR	OEE	AV	SSS	RC
(N) Neuroticism	Spearman's RHO							
	Correlation coefficient	-,387*	-,518*	-,156*	-,522*	-,091*	-,017	-,015
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,001	,531	,574
	N	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347
(E) Extraversion	Correlation coefficient	-,312*	-,221*	-,222*	-,199*	-,114*	-,208*	-,072**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,008
	N	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347
	Correlation coefficient	-,339*	-,152*	-,323*	-,140*	-,181*	-,109*	,026
(O) Openness to experience	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,339
	N	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347
	Correlation coefficient	-,325*	-,317*	-,251*	-,458*	-,019	-,088*	-,200**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,495	,001	,000
(A) Agreeableness or friendliness	N	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347
	Correlation coefficient	-,518*	-,433*	-,253*	-,409*	,005	-,099*	,022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,854	,000	,423
	N	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347	1347

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

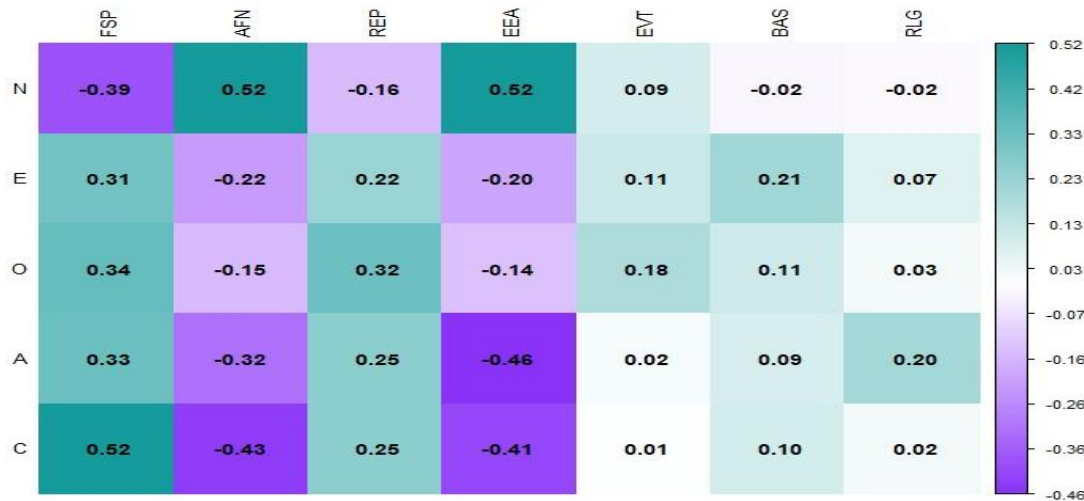
complying with the ethical principles of social science research.

TABLE 3. SPEARMAN CORRELATION BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS AND STRESS-COPING STYLES.

Subsequently, the data were processed and analyzed with SPSS software. Due to the absence of normality in the distribution of the variables, Spearman's correlation coefficient was applied, which is suitable for nonparametric analysis. For the visualization of the results, the R statistical environment was used, where heatmaps were generated from the correlation coefficients, as well as line graphs representing the means of the personality traits and coping styles grouped according to the levels of work adaptation.

## RESULTS

FIGURE 1: HEATMAP



The results of the correlational analysis reveal that certain personality traits of the Five-Factor Model are consistently associated with specific Stress Coping Styles, which gives way to relevant analyses for application in the workplace.

The Responsibility trait showed a considerable positive correlation with the Problem-Solving Focus (PSF) strategy ( $p = .518$ ), suggesting that organized, disciplined, and goal-focused individuals tend to approach stressful situations with problem-solving strategies. Likewise, this trait presented positive mean correlations with Positive Reappraisal ( $p = .253$ ), weak positive correlations with Seeking Social Support ( $p = .099$ ) and with Religiosity ( $p = .022$ ), suggesting a predisposition to present more adaptive behaviors in this trait. Contrasting with their counterparts in considerable negative correlations we have Negative Self-Focus (AFN) ( $p = -.433$ ) and Open Emotional Expression (OEE) ( $p = -.409$ ), being these coping styles more focused on the problem, generating discourses that add complexity and not solution.

The Neuroticism trait evidenced an opposite profile. It was significantly positively associated with the strategy of Negative Self-Focus ( $p = .518$ ) and with Open Emotional Expression ( $p = .522$ ), reflecting that collaborators with this personality trait tend to present fluctuation at the emotional level and perceive themselves as insecure in the face of stressful events, this being a more maladaptive profile. In addition, it presented a medium negative correlation with Focus on Problem Solving ( $p = -.387$ ) and a weak negative correlation with Positive Re-evaluation ( $p = -.156$ ). It was also weakly positively related to Avoidance ( $p = .091$ ), reflecting a predisposition to avoid difficult situations that provoke stress in the work environment.

Openness to Experience was positively associated on average with Problem Solving Focus ( $p = .339$ ) and Positive Re-evaluation ( $p = .323$ ), indicating that profiles with this trait tend to adopt coping that allows them to cope with challenges and adapt better. It also showed weak positive correlations with Avoidance ( $p = .181$ ), Religiosity ( $p = .026$ ) and negative correlations with dysfunctional strategies such as Negative Self-Focus ( $p = -.152$ ) and Open Emotional Expression ( $p = -.140$ ), suggesting that these profiles are not always predisposed to experience all situations, and may become selective with those that generate negative consequences.

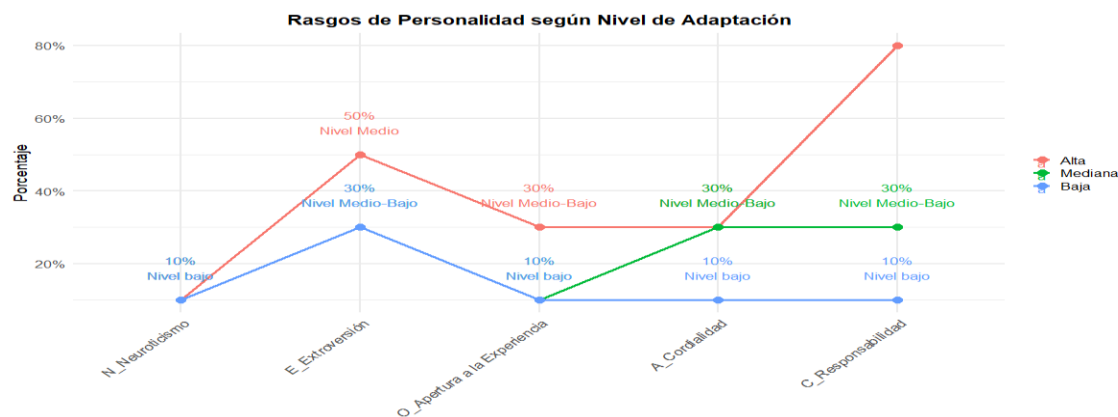
Agreeableness or friendliness showed relevant associations with certain coping styles. It correlated positively in a medium way with PSF ( $p = .325$ ) and Positive Reappraisal ( $p = .251$ ), as well as weakly with Seeking Social Support ( $p = .088$ ) and with Religiosity ( $p = .200$ ). These associations point to a more cooperative style, which seeks more social interaction and empathy. In turn, Agreeableness-Friendliness showed considerable negative correlations with OEE ( $p = -.458$ ) and NSF ( $p = -.317$ ), indicating a low tendency to externalize negative emotions or perceive oneself negatively.

Extraversion was positively correlated on average with Problem-Solving Focus ( $p = .312$ ), Positive Reappraisal ( $p = .222$ ) and Seeking Social Support ( $p = .208$ ), characteristics of profiles that take initiative and are open to receiving help from others. It also presented a medium negative correlation with NSF ( $p = -.221$ ), and a weak

positive correlation with Avoidance ( $p = .114$ ), indicating that, although they may show security in most cases, they may occasionally avoid certain interactions with people or situations.

These findings highlight the relationship between personality traits and coping styles that demonstrate behaviors with greater or lesser adaptation to work, being able to incorporate these results in the profiling processes, which will allow selecting, developing and providing growth opportunities to employees, with a higher rate of effectiveness.

FIGURE 2: PERSONALITY TRAITS ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF ADAPTATION



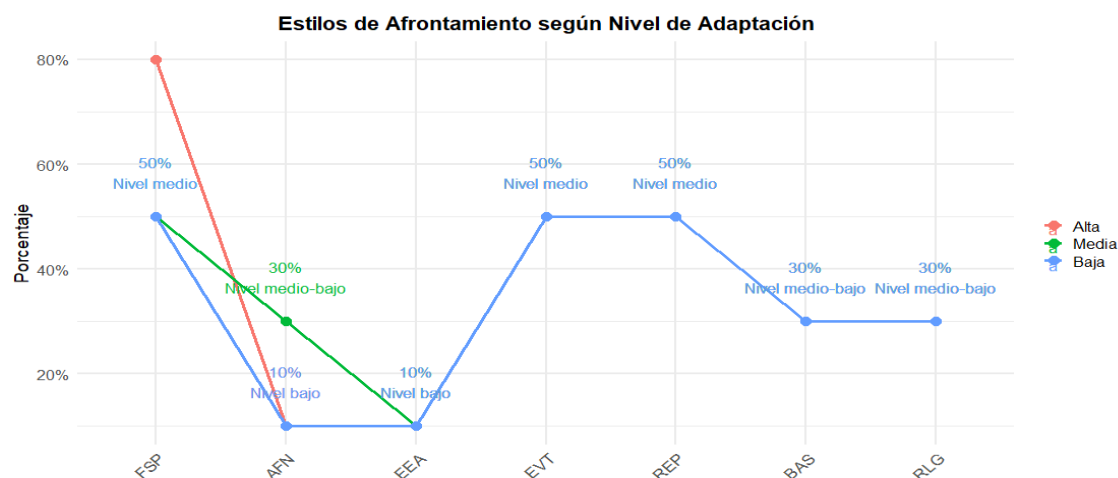
The line graph shows the percentage distribution of the five major personality traits (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness-Friendliness and Conscientiousness) according to three levels of psychosocial adaptation in the work environment: high, medium and low.

From an organizational perspective, the profile of highly adaptive individuals is significantly highlighted by a high level of Conscientiousness (80%) and a medium level of Extraversion (50%), suggesting that the most adaptive employees tend to be perseverant, organized, reliable and socially active. These traits are strongly related to effective work behaviors such as goal accomplishment, initiative and collaboration.

In contrast, the low adaptive group presents homogeneous and low percentages (10%) in all traits, being especially worrisome the low level of Conscientiousness and Agreeableness-Friendliness, characteristics that are usually critical for team integration, emotional regulation and adequate conflict management. In addition, low Neuroticism in this group may not necessarily be a positive indicator, as it could reflect a low emotional response or indifference to relevant work situations.

The group with a medium level of adaptation presents similar proportions (30%) in Conscientiousness, Agreeableness-Friendliness, and Openness to Experience, which suggests a moderately adaptive profile, which could be considered in programs for the development of achievement-oriented socioemotional skills.

FIGURE 3: STRESS-COPING STYLES ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF ADAPTATION



The graph examines how Stress Coping Styles are distributed according to work adaptation, finding significant results that can be extrapolated to human talent management.

Problem-Solving Focus (PSF) predominates in the group with high adaptation (80%), which gives us indications that employees with higher job adaptation focus more on conflict resolution and overcoming work adversities, positioning it as a potential predictor of organizational adaptation.

In contrast, styles such as negative self-focus (NSF) and adaptive emotional appraisal (AEA) are observed more frequently in the low adaptation groups, which reflects a tendency to have ruminative ideas, insecurity, emotional discomfort, factors that can negatively affect job adoption and mental health.

Finally, styles such as avoidance (AV), positive reappraisal (PR), seeking social support (SSS) and religious coping (RC), appear with a medium or low frequency in the 3 low-adapted novices, suggesting that these factors are not sufficient by themselves to predict optimal work adjustment.

## DISCUSSION

The findings in this study provide evidence on the joint and individual interaction of personality traits and coping styles to stress, and their influence on adaptation at work, offering valuable evidence to be considered in the strategic management of Human Talent within organizations.

The trait of Conscientiousness is evidenced as a strong predictor of work adaptation, because employees with high and medium levels in this trait showed high adaptation rates in contrast to those who did not. This finding is congruent with the results of several meta-analyses that have highlighted the importance of considering personality factors when assigning roles or areas, and whose strategy has proven to be effective when observing adaptive behaviors of workers (Mohammed & Syah, 2025), also reinforcing the consistency of responsibility as a predictor of job performance in multiple occupations and contexts (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hough, 1992). Likewise, although with less explanatory weight, traits such as Extraversion, Openness to experience and Agreeableness also show a significant relationship with adaptation, presenting successful social behaviors that lead them to generate bonds (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002), obtaining support and a sense of belonging in the work team (George, 1996). Openness to experience provides cognitive flexibility and creativity, essential competencies to respond with innovative ideas to changing work contexts (Blickle, Wenzel, & Summers, 2006).

Regarding coping styles, the data reveal that the most adaptive workers resort primarily to active strategies focused on problem solving, while presenting low levels of negative self-focus. This trend aligns with the transactional theory of coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which proposes that active coping allows for effective cognitive restructuring and mobilization of appropriate behavioral resources, minimizing the impact of stressors. In line with this, previous research has linked problem-focused coping with lower levels of burnout and greater psychological well-being in demanding work contexts (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Penley, Tomaka, & Wiebe, 2002).

In contrast, the greater presence of negative self-focus in the maladaptive group suggests deficits in emotional regulation and metacognitive awareness, making it difficult to identify stress early and generate effective responses (Wells & Matthews, 1994). This maladaptive style may limit the ability of employees to self-regulate emotionally and maintain sustained performance in the face of complex work demands.

The results highlight the importance of conducting psychological assessments within the selection, development and promotion processes in human talent management (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). In addition, the design of training programs that promote problem-solving and cognitive restructuring skills, through active methodologies such as interactive workshops and structured feedback, could significantly enhance functional coping and emotional regulation among employees.

However, this study has certain methodological limitations. By using a cross-sectional design, it is not possible to establish causal relationships between traits, coping and adaptation; therefore, it is recommended that future research adopt longitudinal approaches to assess the stability and directionality of the effects. In addition, the sample was mostly composed of workers with access to telework modalities, which limits the generalization to occupations of an operational nature or with high physical demands. Finally, although validated psychometric instruments were used (e.g., NEO-FFI: Costa & McCrae, 1992; CAE: Bonifacio & Chorot, 2003), future research could complement the analysis with physiological indicators of stress (such as cortisol) or with objective metrics of organizational performance.

In summary, the combination of high responsibility and the predominant use of active coping strategies is associated with a more effective and sustainable work adjustment. Thus, organizations that integrate these findings into their talent management policies will be better positioned to optimize their selection, training and organizational well-being processes, while strengthening their resilience in the face of increasingly complex and dynamic work environments.

## CONCLUSION

The results obtained in the study allow us to conclude that Responsibility is a key predictor of work adjustment, as it contains within its description behaviors such as planning, self-control and goal orientation. This relationship is reinforced by its positive and considerable correlation with coping focused on problem solving ( $p = .518$ ), this strategy is strongly associated with toast.



This allows us to indicate that employees who demonstrate greater responsibility also present more adaptive coping behaviors, favoring their adaptation to the various work demands.

Likewise, traits such as Extraversion, Openness to experience and Cordiality act as complementary facilitators of work adaptation, by promoting smoother social integration, greater cognitive flexibility and positive interpersonal relationships, as reflected by the higher means in the highly adaptive groups in the line graphs analyzed. These profiles favor not only individual performance, but also group cohesion and dynamics.

Consistent with recent research (Guadalupe & DeShong, 2025), it is observed that responsibility, extraversion and openness present positive associations with problem-focused coping, whereas neuroticism or its analogue in the HEXACO model, emotionality is linked to dysfunctional coping styles, particularly avoidant coping. This pattern is clearly visualized in the heat map, where negative correlations between emotionality and adaptive strategies such as cognitive reframing and active coping are evident (Raghuvanshi & Srivastava, 2025), suggesting a lower capacity for emotional self-regulation in demanding work contexts.

On the other hand, the predominance of problem-focused strategies, accompanied by reduced levels of negative self-focus in the most adapted workers, configures a resilient psychological profile and demonstrates achievement-oriented organizational behaviors. This combination not only allows buffering the impact of organizational stressors, but also increases the perception of personal efficacy and sustained occupational well-being.

However, it is necessary to acknowledge the methodological limitations of the study. The cross-sectional nature of the data precludes establishing causal relationships between the constructs analyzed, so it is recommended that longitudinal research be developed to examine the directionality and stability of these links over time. In addition, the composition of the sample, mostly linked to telework modalities, limits the generalization of the results to other work contexts with greater physical or face-to-face demands.

In sum, the results underscore the need for organizations to systematically incorporate personality assessments, especially of the trait of responsibility, as well as coping styles, in their talent selection, training and development processes. Similarly, it is suggested to design training interventions aimed at strengthening active coping and cognitive restructuring, through experiential methodologies such as simulations, problem-solving workshops and training in emotional self-regulation. These actions will not only increase adaptation and sustained performance, but will also contribute to strengthening individual and organizational resilience, positively impacting psychological health and the long-term success of organizations.

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