

Mental Health Among Working Professionals After COVID-19 Second Lockdown: The Influence of Personality Traits on Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic has greater impact in the lives of people throughout the world in terms of finance, job, daily routine which brought significant changes in the life style and behaviour thus resulting in new habit formations. Covid -19 did not only result on the physical health of the people but in fact created a huge turn over in the mental health of the people. By government's strict implementation of night curfew and restricting the operational hours from morning 6am to 10am, in stopping the spread of COVID-19 to adopt the new protective changes, it affected the individual's mental health by creating unstable financial condition and uncertainty about the future, along with drop in the economy of the country. Restrictions due to covid-19 and insecurity among the working people ended up with the lower levels of life satisfaction. To continue with work, the companies started to make their employees work from home to protect the employee. The work from home scenario brought in lot of psychological as well as physical changes in employees. The present research tries to understand the impact of second lockdown due to covid-19 and the personality characteristics which contributed working from home as well the psychological wellbeing and general health among the working population.

Keywords: Covid Anxiety, Mental Health of Working Professionals, Personality Traits, General Health, Lockdown, pandemic.

The general health and psychological well-being of the working people can be influenced due to various factors like their personality characteristics, their coping mechanism and other psychological factors. The Big Five Model, by Mc Crae and Costa is the mostly adopted model which measures the five different dimensions of personality such as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness, and these aspects accountable for the thoughts, behaviors during the different situations in their life based on their experiences. Personality traits, therefore, can figure an individual's responses to various life situations by affecting their cognitive assessments, the

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emotions connected with them, and the approach used to control those affective instigations. Research done on personality traits show that agreeableness and openness to experience were negatively associated with anxiety disorders, whereas fantasy in openness was positively associated with anxiety disorders (Ana V. Nikčević, 2021). Aspects of neuroticism were positively connected with affective disorders. Positive emotion in extroversion, and competence and self-discipline in conscientiousness, was negatively related with affective disorders). At the characteristic level, withdrawal in neuroticism was positively related with Major Depressive Disorder, whereas industriousness in conscientiousness was negatively associated with Major Depressive Disorder. (Lyon Ka, 2021). Research also established high conscientiousness in the people is those who felt more vulnerable by the coronavirus stored more toilet paper (Garbe et al., 2020). Research on the perceived threat, in turn, was predicted by (Negative) Emotionality (Blagov, 2020). Research on similar line found that self-reported current health behavior (i.e., social distancing, sanitation) was positively correlated with Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism and negatively correlated with Extraversion, Psychopathic, and Machiavellianism (Nowak et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought intense changes to our living style since its early onset from 2020. These changes appear to have led to a surge of pandemic-related psychological distress including fear, anxiety, perceived threat, and stress. Researches done on early onset of COVID-19 in China have suggested that more than one quarter of the general population undergone moderate to severe levels of stress and/or anxiety-related symptoms in retort to COVID-19 (C Wang, 2020). The pandemic seems to be playing a tremendous change in shaping the behaviors, and it is to realize that the nature and degree of the distress it is causing in the working population (R Rodríguez-Rey · 2020).

Research done in present condition of work from home has shown that women and young reported anxiety, depression, conflict among family and work relationship, conscientiousness, and extraversion (Shiyi Zhou, 2018). Men reported elevated emotional stability and the performance rely on individual differences. Depression, anxiety and life satisfaction were predicted by personality and social or work variables, which emphasize the priority of consideration, to these variables to address mental health in this situation. (Inmaculada López-Núñez, 2020). A study conducted in German, found out that Neuroticism predicted more worrying and negative affect during the pandemic (Kroencke et al., 2020). Another study from United States, groups of general psychological responses to the pandemic (ignorant, panic, informed) were identified that differed in their levels of Neuroticism, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness found in two UK samples that Honesty-Humility was negatively associated with accumulation of behavior and intentions. (Stadler et al., 2020). Columbus (2020).

Most health-relevant proportions and degree appear to be multipart mixtures of wide personality domains, disparity in many health-related personalities is explained to an important level by the 5-factor model, and like conscientiousness and openness the 2 of 5 personality domains appear to be considerably neglected in health psychology research. (Marshall, Wortman, Vickers, Kusulas, & Hervig, 1994). Extraversion was allied with positive health behaviours and openness to experience and agreeableness were coupled with positive health perceptions (L. Jerram, 2010). All the five personality traits were found to be considerably related to mood and engagement in healthy activities, enhanced mood and better wellness engagements were found to be prominently associated with lower levels of neuroticism and higher levels of extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and

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conscientiousness and higher neuroticism and higher extraversion scores related to perceived lower levels of stress, (David C. Rettew, 2021). Except the neuroticism, all the Big Five Factors had a negative correlation to health anxiety, COVID-19 anxiety, and generalized anxiety and symptoms of depression (Ana V. Nikčević, 2020). Negative correlation was found with covid-19 anxiety and Extraversion. Health anxiety and Covid-19 anxiety has a positive correlation with generalized anxiety and depressive symptoms. (J Affect Disord. 2021). Every trait of Big Five Personality has an influence to health-related outcomes, out of which neuroticism has worse consistent relative health outcome., (Knežević, 2009). Significant correlation was found among the personality dimensions like neuroticism, conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeement with health variables and quality of life in the Department of Surgery. Meanwhile openness to experience had no major correlation with any of the personality variables. Also, there was a important relationship between the three variables of public health, quality of life with burnout. (Bilehsavar, 2017).

Apart from personality traits of Big Five factors there are other traits which can also contribute to individual differences in behaviors. Traits of dark triad tend to have create a difference on to the behaviors. (Kaufman, 2019). Narcissism is one of the dark traits can be one of the significant factors which can contribute to the changes in behavior. The trait can have a strong impact on how the person reacts to virus (eg., washing hands) and also it would have a strong impact on how it influences other peoples (hoarding groceries), (Bartłomiej Nowak, 2020).

Present Research

The psychological and behavioural response to present scenario because of COVID-19 can be influenced by several factors like person's characteristics and resources (eg., Gori, Topino, Palazzeschi & Fabio, 2021; Crosta , Palumbo , Marchetti , Ceccato , La Malva , Maiella, 2020). In the present study we try to investigate the mental health among working population and its relation with personality traits. In this study General Health questionnaire is used with Covid Anxiety Scale to measure the mental health and Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale, and the 10-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) scale is used to understand the contributing factors to mental health. Based on the previous research following hypothesis have been found:

H1: The COVID anxiety would be positively related to general health.

H2: The personality trait would be negatively related to general health.

H3: The personality trait would be negatively related to COVID anxiety.

H4: The hypersensitivity narcissistic trait would be positively related to general health.

H5: The hypersensitivity narcissistic trait would be positively related to COVID anxiety.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Total 252 participants took part in the survey. The mean age was found to be 34.54 (SD= 8.69). Out of the participants 112 were males, 139 were females and one preferred not to say. 50% of the participant was having a post graduate degree; 34.1% was having a graduate degree and rest was having professional degree. 58.7% of the participant have started working from their office and rest of their are still working from home.

Procedure: Following the restriction of government regarding COVID-19 and reducing the contact to lessen the risk of COVID-19 the survey was collected online. Gosling et al (2004)

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has also suggested that online survey was reliable and valid. The questionnaire was prepared using Google form and was circulated using WhatsApp. Informed consent was taken from the participant before the start of the survey. The participant was instructed that taking part in the survey is voluntary in nature and they can quit any time in case of feeling of any discomfort. The data was collected during the time period of a week (18th September to 26th September 2021).

Measures

The survey consisted of four scales. Along with these scales socio-demographic data like age, gender and educational qualification was also collected.

- **COVID anxiety scale.** COVID anxiety was measured by five item scale developed by Lee, 2020. Each item was rated on a 5-point scale to reflect the frequency of the symptom, ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (nearly every day) over the preceding two weeks. The cronbach alpha was reported to 0.93.
- **TUPI scale.** The personality traits were assessed by Ten Item Personality Inventory. The scale consists of ten items. The scale is based upon Big- Five dimensions of personality and was developed by Gosling et al., (2003).
- **GHQ-12 scale.** The General Health Questionnaire-12 consists of twelve items and is a brief measure for psychological distress. The scale was developed by Goldberg and Williams (1988). The short questionnaire measures and screens people for psychological distress. It measures the symptoms on four point scale based on levels of symptoms present. The reported omega for this scale is 0.81.
- **HSNS.** The Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale consists of ten items and is a measure of covert and overt narcissistic tendency of an individual. The scale was developed by Hendin & Cheek, (2013). The items are measured on five point Likert scale starting from very uncharacteristic to very characteristics.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the descriptive and table 2 shows bivariate analysis for study variables. The result clearly shows significant positive correlation between general health and covid anxiety; hypersensitivity narcissism and general health and covid anxiety as well. The result related to big five personality trait shows negative correlation between covid anxiety and big five factors. The result also shows negative correlation between general health and big five factors. The hypersensitiveness narcissism scale shows significant positive correlation between it and general health and covid anxiety.

Table 1: Table to show the descriptive of the study variables

	COVID anxiety	GHQ	HSNS	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Emotional stability	Conscientiousness	Openness to experience
Mean	1.88	9.65	25.70	9.60	10.46	9.75	10.85	11.13
SD	3.11	6.5	5.389	2.69	2.772	2.849	2.82	2.66

Table 2: Table to show the correlation matrix between the study variables

	GHQ	HSNS	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Emotional stability	Conscientiousness	Openness to experience
COVID anxiety	.249**	.222**	-.058	-.06	-.128*	-.129*	-.141*
GHQ		.281**	-.163**	-.14*	-.407**	-.389**	-.321**

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The regression analysis was done. Linear regression was carried out when COVID anxiety was taken as the dependent variable and big five factors and HSNS as predictor variables. The $F(6, 245) = 2.614^{**}$. Although the F was found to be significant but only the coefficient for HSNS was found to be significant. Adjusted $R^2 = .037$. Linear regression was also carried out for general health and big five factors and HSNS was taken as predictor variables. The $F(6,245)=15.369^{**}$. Although F was significant the coefficient values for each predictor was not found significant. The adjusted $R^2 = .256$.

Hypothesis Testing

Correlation and regression was done to verify and test the hypothesis. In the present research mental health was measured through general health measure and COVID anxiety. The result of present research showed significant positive relationship between both the variables. This shows that H1 is accepted. The result on personality traits showed positive relationship with COVID anxiety as well as but regression is showing positive but not significant. Thus, our H2 is partially accepted. The result on personality traits with its relation with general health show significant negative correlation. Thus, H3 is accepted. The result on hypersensitivity narcissism showed positive relationship with COVID anxiety and general health. The regression result showed 3.7% change in COVID anxiety when narcissism and big five factors are contributing. The regression analysis also shows 25.6% change in general health due to narcissism and big five factors. So, from the results it can be said that fourth and fifth hypothesis are accepted.

DISCUSSION

The present research tried to find out the relationship between the mental health and personality trait. In the present research mental health was measured through general health measure and covid anxiety. The result of present research showed significant positive relationship between both the variables. Recent researches done on relation between COVID anxiety and health anxiety show similar results as the results of present research (Jungmann & Witthoft, 2020). The result shows negative relationship of general health with all five factors. The reason for extraversion having negative relationship can be due to imposed lockdown and leading them to be confined and causing them discomfort to stay at home and adjust with others. Previous research done on personality traits and health anxiety showed that neuroticism and conscientiousness are most linked among the big five factors (Cox, Borger, Asmundson & Taylor, 2000). Recent researches done on young population show similar results (Rettew et al., 2021). The emotional stability and conscientiousness showed negative relationship with covid anxiety. The present research is in accordance with previous research which shows that previous research neuroticism being a vulnerability factor for both health anxiety and generalized anxiety (e.g., Jylha & Isometsa, 2006; Williams, 2004).

The result on hypersensitivity narcissism showed positive relationship with covid anxiety and general health. The result can be attributed to the reason that hypersensitivity in the people lead to anxiousness towards contracting covid and becoming more anxious. People with high hypersensitivity would have devoted more time for their betterment and thus leading to higher health coefficients. Previous research on dark traits also shows that people with collective narcissism engage in hoarding behaviours (Nowak, 2020). Previous researches done on personality traits and its relation with COVID have been mostly carried out in western countries. The present research has been done in the Indian context and has been done in a time frame when people were trying to cope up with the COVID and trying

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to adapt the new normal. The present research adds to literature on personality traits. Present research contributes to literature pertaining to covid situation and its effect on mental health with reference to India. The present research shows that hypersensitivity narcissism and big five factors contribute to general health and anxiety thus impacting the mental health. The present research adds significant literature.

Limitations and Future Directions

TUPI was used as personality measure which is concise. The results of the present research show direction of contribution of personality factors to the mental health. Further research can be done using any personality scale having higher number of items. Further research with larger sample size can be done to establish the results further more.

CONCLUSION

The present research tapped into the present mental state of the working population and could predict the anxiety and health with respect to big five factors.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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