

COVID-19 Stress: Relationships with Resilience and the Big Five Personality Traits

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The COVID-19 pandemic is a chronic stressor faced by individuals, globally. Notably, some individuals may either struggle or thrive during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous research has shown that resilience and the Big Five personality traits are factors that influence perceived stress, yet not all three have been studied together. The current study examined how resilience and the Big Five predict perceived stress associated with COVID-19. Participants consisted of 132 undergraduate students enrolled in a first-year psychology course from Brandon University, who completed a survey composed of demographic questions, COVID-19 Stressors Scale, 10-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10), and Big Five Inventory (BFI). Ninety percent of participants were between the ages of 18-25 years old, 78% identified as female, 71% identified as Caucasian and 13% as Indigenous, and 80% were first- or second- year students. Pearson correlations were carried out to examine the relationships between the key variables, and multiple regression analyses were conducted to predict COVID-19 stress from resilience and the Big Five. It was expected that perceived stress associated with COVID-19 would be strongly, positively correlated with resilience, Conscientiousness, Openness to experience, and Extraversion, whereas COVID-19 stress would be inversely correlated with Agreeableness and Neuroticism. Further, it was expected that COVID-19 stress would be predicted by resilience, Openness, and Neuroticism.

Although the perceived stress associated with COVID-19 did not correlate as expected with resilience and all of the Big Five personality traits, Extraversion was strongly, positively correlated with COVID-19 stress. In addition, resilience was strongly, positively correlated with Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and negatively correlated with

Neuroticism. A regression analysis showed that resilience was predicted by Extraversion, Openness to experience, and Neuroticism. Notably, resilience emerged as a central individual difference that was strongly related to most of the Big Five factors and gender differences. IN an additional regression analysis, gender significantly predicted perceived stress associated with COVID-19. Therefore, women were more likely to experience stress associated with the pandemic, given that the majority of participants were female.

Overall, this study showed that perceived stress associated with COVID-19 was correlated with some of the Big Five personality traits. Given that the central focus on perceived stress associated with COVID-19 was not well supported by the findings, it is important for future studies to consider using two stress measures, one general and one COVID-19 specific. Including two measures would likely yield better outcomes given that it would provide a well-rounded measurement of stress. Second, future studies could explore how gender is related to COVID-19 stress and resilience. Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing literature on stress experienced during the pandemic. In particular, this study demonstrated that individuals who are more sociable may experience greater COVID-19 stress. As well, this study supported previous literature that resilience is related to most of the Big Five personality traits. At most, the research findings indicated that resilient individuals may be more sociable, tolerant of change, and worry less.