

Introduction

- Long periods of social isolation were implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19
- However, individuals varied substantially in their adherence to social isolation protocols
- These social restrictions have increased levels of stress (Taylor et al.,2020) and anxiety (Lee,2020).

Purpose

This study will explore the relationship between personality and social distancing behaviors.

Methods

Participants were 541 adults aged 10-85 years.

Participants were recruited from online advertisements they took an online survey including demographics, personality, and behavior:

- **Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10)** – self reported
- **Days in Quarantine** – self reported
- **Days in Social Distance** – self reported

Results

Linear Regression Predicting Days in Quarantine from Neuroticism and Extraversion

| Model | | Unstandardized | Standard Error | Standardized | t | p |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| H ₀ | (Intercept) | 29.630 | 0.862 | | 34.366 | <.001 |
| H ₁ | (Intercept) | 26.575 | 4.710 | | 5.642 | <.001 |
| | Extraverted | -0.777 | 0.992 | -0.047 | -0.783 | 0.434 |
| | Neuroticism | 1.884 | 0.942 | 0.119 | 2.000 | 0.046 |

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| Model | | Unstandardized | Standard Error | Standardized | t | p |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------|--------|
| H ₀ | (Intercept) | 30.923 | 0.742 | | 41.659 | < .001 |
| H ₁ | (Intercept) | 29.257 | 4.155 | | 7.041 | < .001 |
| | Extraverted | -0.173 | 0.867 | -0.010 | -0.200 | 0.842 |
| | Neuroticism | 0.749 | 0.826 | 0.047 | 0.908 | 0.365 |

One significant predictor emerged from the analysis.

- **High scores on Neuroticism predicted more days in quarantine.**
- Extraversion was not associated with any self-isolating behaviors, contrary to the hypothesis.

Discussion

- Theorists Watson & Hubbard (1996), suggested that neuroticism and extraversion are partially determined by coping styles, where different coping styles would impact their personalities.
- These coping styles may manifest as self-isolating behaviors during times of threat or stress
- Participants scoring high in Neuroticism exhibit more emotional variability, which may produce heightened fear or anxiety over the possibility of infection
- Extraversion did not predict lower social isolation behavior

Conclusions

- This study should be expanded to other populations.
- Self-reporting of self-isolation may be subject to social desirability bias
- This study may be helpful to understanding how to improve compliance to social distancing protocols for the next pandemic
- Government / public health systems can consider results prior to implement isolation periods

