



## Neuroticism Symptoms Among Population During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract

*The occurrence of neuroticism symptoms seems to have arisen in the population after the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the toxic positivity symptoms. Neuroticism is a general dimension of individual change. It is widely regarded as the single most important feature of the human personality. In this regard, this article will address this symptom of psychopathology and will argue on the basis of the literature and the theoretical framework in order to examine the basic characteristics of the trait and why it is important. In addition, the aim of this article is to better understand the occurrence over the period of the COVID-19 pandemic in the population. For the analysis, the article uses an exploratory methodology to further identify the phenomenon in question. As seen from the analysis, neuroticism has important implications for almost every aspect of human functioning. Neuroticism is highly correlated with other pathologies with depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and borderline personality disorder, which on the other hand have contributed to increased neuroticism occurrence in between the population post during and post-pandemic. Severe neuroticism is a feature that was somehow widespread in public health, following the COVID-19 pandemic, along with many other psychopathological implications.*

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original work is properly cited.



*Therefore, neuroticism is an important factor that needs to be evaluated and analyzed more in-depth in health studies, especially over the last pandemic year.*

**Keywords:** *Neuroticism, pandemic, population, symptoms, psychopathology*

## **Introduction**

The occurrence of neuroticism symptoms seems to have risen in the population after the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the toxic positivity symptoms. As a psychopathology which has been lately identified frequently among the population, and for which the incidence appears to be increasing significantly, it is necessary to study and analyze it in more detail. Neuroticism is a very important trait of human personality, as it represents an indicator of individual's level of change. Neuroticism is important, as it represents one of the general traits that make up the highest level of the human personality hierarchy. In this regard, this article will address this symptom of psychopathology and will argue on the basis of the literature and the theoretical framework in order to examine the basic characteristics of the trait and why it is important. In addition, the aim of this article is to better understand the occurrence over the period of the COVID-19 pandemic in the population. For the analysis, the article uses an exploratory methodology to further identify the phenomenon in question.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Neuroticism and the symptoms of its occurrence**

Neuroticism represents individual change, and how or how much an individual perceives the world surrounding him as threatening. People in this dimension experience different negative feelings or emotions and intensely higher. From the point of view of general characteristics, these individuals generally suffer from several types of problems (both mental and physical problems and not very disturbing ones). These individuals generally tend to blame themselves for their problems and tend to be largely inferior as nature. Individuals who exhibit neuroticism problems are self-critical and on the other hand, sensitive to the criticism of others, displaying feelings of weakness. These individuals tend to see the world in a very negative light, and see threats, problems, and crises where others do not. Neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative emotional effects, including anger, anxiety, self-awareness, nervousness, emotional instability, and depression.

Moreover, individuals with high levels of neuroticism does not have good coping mechanisms regarding stress, but instead they perceive everything as a threat even when they experience minor frustrations. Neuroticism is one of the most established and empirically proven fields of psychopathology, with a considerable variety of research. As such, the basis for argumentation is quite broad. Moreover, we must add that neuroticism symptoms show a variety of forms of mental as well as physical dysfunction. Neuroticism is evident and much linked with many prevailing patterns of personality, personality disorder, and psychopathology. However, in parentheses and in relation to observations in the population, neuroticism has major implications for public health. It provides a temporary sensitivity to a wide range of different forms of psychopathology, which were evident in people in the post-COVID-19 period. In addition to somatic symptoms, neuroticism is associated with a relatively wide range of physical ailments, such as heart problems, impaired immune function, asthma, atopic eczema, and in some cases there was found a correlation even between mortality and neuroticism. Numerous studies have shown that the relationship between neuroticism and human health, in fact, left both direct and indirect relationships, as neurotic symptoms make the individual more vulnerable, and give them the tendency to exaggerate current problems causing health consequences (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017). Therefore, neuroticism is also linked with lower quality of life and in many areas of life, including feelings of unwillingness, excessive anxiety, failure at work, and marital dissatisfaction. Neuroticism is also associated with low performance in the workplace due to emotional problem, which causes the individual both fatigue and distraction which in turn greatly affect his performance. Neuroticism has also been shown throughout studies to affect the marital relationship of different individuals, but also the subjective feelings of total dissatisfaction in marriage, often without a specific cause (Widiger, 2017). Neuroticism is treatable by both pharmacological and cognitive therapies. As for the treatment of neuroticism, at least in the treatments that are available today. These treatments focus on the symptoms of neuroticism, however it should be noted that this requires early recognition of the problem and its symptoms, often by the patient himself in order to present to the psychologist. It should be emphasized that the implications of public health for direct treatment and even prevention of the development of neuroticism are essential. Neuroticism has long been known since the beginning of basic personality research and may even be the first field of personality to be identified within the field of psychology in general and psychopathology in particular. From the point of view of the disorder classified according to DSM-

5, it is clearly evidenced that neuroticism is linked to the general personality included area within the five-factor model. This trait model consists of five broad domains, including negative affectivity (along with detachment, psychoticism, antagonism, etc.). As stated in the DSM-5, "these five broad domains are ill-adapted variants of the five widely validated and replicated personality model domains known as the Five Personality Factor model." (APA, 2013). Neuroticism in particular by numerous researchers, is now gaining lot of interest and a lot of back up research as data shows that neuroticisms is linked to general health conditions. Therefore, in general terms we can summarize that neuroticism is a fundamental area of personality highly affecting human health, as well as e series of psychopathological and physical concerns for the individuals. It contributes to the appearance of many significant life-threatening outcomes as well as impairs the ability of persons to address them adequately. Lastly, it should be emphasized that neuroticism as one of the most important areas of personality, is increasingly recognized and should be more studied, especially in cases such Albania, where Covid-19, highly impacted a lot of individuals.

## **2.2 The association of neuroticism with psychopathology, and its association with other psychopathologies**

Neuroticism has long been closely linked as one of the most important personality traits in psychopathology, especially in relation to anxiety and depression. However, it is often argued this feature has historically been based solely on factor analysis of common settings used to describe common behaviors. In numerous studies, it appears that neuroticism has been shown to have multiple and repetitive relationships with many psychopathologies, and this more than any other personality trait (Clark and Watson, 1999). It is associated with numerous clinical syndromes, such as anxiety, mood disorders, substance use, eating disorders, personality disorders, and has even been linked to schizophrenia. Of course, it is already known that psychological disorders are mainly associated with important correlational relationships in this regard. The quantity or quality of this relationship is not entirely unknown, given that for example if we take the case of emotional disorders, they are one of the defining criteria of neuroticism and psychological disorder as a whole.

Frustration, anger, depression, stress and self-blame are just some of the main symptoms and personality symbol of people who typically have the features of neuroticism. This is, as we

mentioned, an essential feature of the individual, who is closely associated with individuals with a very pessimistic approach to life and who react very severely to whatever problems they open up. These people are easily stressed and constantly feel hopeless and tend to feel bad about us emotionally, and do not have an accurate or calm reaction when other people address or express emotions towards them. It should be noted that this trait or these individuals have a pronounced lack of emotional intelligence in general, and above all it should be noted that they are more likely to exhibit problems with other disorders or other psychopathologies, specifically and in particular with mental disorders and with depression. Because of such problems, these people suffer a lot in their careers and do not succeed, neither internally nor externally. On the other hand, until today it has been a bit problematic to scientifically measure neuroticism and to identify this psychopathology, or specifically the etiology of psychopathology (Claridge & Davis, 2001). This has certainly happened because the main factors or biological mechanisms that influence the development of neuroticism are not yet known, and it must be said that in recent years the study of this issue has received a great impetus. Most studies in the field of psychology still link neuroticism with the stresses an individual goes through in life or with his or her emotional disorders. Other causes include substance abuse, substance abuse, etc. Of course, there are still unknown causes, mainly the health of the individual. It is also worth noting that neuroticism exponentially increases the impact and degree of psychiatric problems. Therefore, it is a very important risk factor to consider in depressive episodes, which affects the degree of the episode. However, the episodes of the neuroticism problem itself are shorter and easier to administer by mental health experts. At this point, we can argue that correlations are essentially non-informative because the results of neuroticism reflect the characteristic (or average) level of anxiety of a person over an extended period of time. It should be noted, however, that until recently, attempts to show the basis for neuroticism and the mechanisms involved have been somehow still limited (Claridge and Davis, 2001). Clinical syndromes, on the other hand, are also closely related to neuroticism, which has been pointed out by the literature, as they contain at their core the subjective concern of the individual and his reaction to this concern. The trait that has shown the most correlational relationship with depression, generalized anxiety disorder, or even borderline personality disorder, is precisely neuroticism.

Recent studies have also shown that neuroticism, generalized anxiety disorder, and depression are not genetically distinct; as they can essentially be traced to a single genetic diathesis that reflects

in turn a sensitivity to subjective concern and negative emotionality, thus essentially related to the very description of neuroticism. The relationships between these variables in the literature have been found to be quite strong, and syndromes such as generalized anxiety disorder and borderline personality disorder, may represent substantially high levels of neuroticism (Widiger et al., 1999). On the other hand, it has been observed from studies that neuroticism has not shown a strong relationship with disorders of the experience of emotional distress, a concrete example in this case may be an individual with a specific phobia (such as fear of getting on the elevator or fear from heights), this as these phobias show no more than modest increase in traits (Mineka et al., 1998).

### **2.3 Life and work dissatisfaction and its relation with neuroticism**

As mentioned earlier, people who exhibit symptoms of neuroticism report dissatisfaction with themselves and the world. This feeling affects every aspect of their lives and the quality of their lives as a whole. Various studies have shown that this category of disorder has greater dissatisfaction and instability in their intimate relationship or with their partner (Karney & Bradbury 1995). The results of these studies related to neuroticism, predict its subsequent course, and how aggravating the situation and how it affects individuals in their daily lives and functionality. The study of Kelly and Conley (1987) for example is quite interesting as it follows in dynamics several couples, over a period of time of not less than 50 years of their marriage. The results of the study showed that individuals who exhibited high levels of neuroticism were in fact more likely to divorce during the course of the study. Even in this study, neuroticism predicted later levels of marital dissatisfaction among the individuals participating in this study. Neuroticism among study participants showed considerable predictive power in more than 1 dimension or measured variable. On the other hand, other studies have shown that people with high neuroticism have greater dissatisfaction at work, even in social life. Staw et al. (1986) on the other hand, in their study, managed to discover that neuroticism in adolescence was an important predictor of job satisfaction even 50 years later (Fawkner, 2012).

### **2.4 Neuroticism and physical health**

For a long period, the psychosomatic hypothesis - the idea that chronically elevated levels of negative emotions will eventually lead to disease - was a prevailing theoretical paradigm in the psychopathology of human behavior. Given that neurotic individuals reported more frequent

episodes of negative emotions, this in turn tells us that neuroticism can be a vulnerability factor even for diseases of the physical health of the individual. The degree of neuroticism may indicate a significant correlation or relationship with the physical symptoms and health problems of individuals. Neurotic individuals may report increased levels of headache, chest pain, coughing, persistent physical fatigue, and many other physical and health problems. However, there have also been studies which have shown that neuroticism was not strongly or consistently associated with direct indicators related to health status. These studies have mostly related to behaviors such as the number of doctor visits for the disease or the direct function of the immune system, etc. In other words, neuroticism is a much better predictor of subjective health complaints than of an objective health status (Kitayama, 2018).

### **3. Conclusion**

As seen from the analysis, neuroticism impacts directly or indirectly almost every aspect of human functioning and human health. However, we still know relatively little about how neuroticism is actually interlinked with somatic symptoms and with every aspect of human life, or how it deeply affects it. Severe neuroticism is a feature that was somehow widespread in public health, following the COVID-19 pandemic, along with many other psychopathological implications. Neuroticism is highly correlational with other pathologies with depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and borderline personality disorder, which on the other hand have contributed in increased neuroticism occurrence between the population post during and post pandemic. Therefore, neuroticism is an important factor that needs to be evaluated and analyzed more in depth in health studies especially over the last pandemic year.

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