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Personality traits, perceived stress and perception of COVID-19 among Arab Population: A cross-sectional survey

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ABSTRACT

Background: Coronavirus disease-2019 is a worldwide pandemic. Political authorities are working hard to fight the disease transmission through corresponding interventions that may be influenced by individual perception, perceived stress, and personality traits that act as predictors of healthy behaviors and comply with protective measures especially with different cultures.

Aim: This study aimed to assess personality traits, perceived stress, and perception among the Arab population.

Methods: A cross-sectional online survey was fulfilled by 948 adults from different Arabic nationalities from 24th June to 15th July 2020. The Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), and Perception toward COVID-19 Questionnaire were used in this study.

Results: More than three quarters (76.1%) believed that COVID 19 is a dangerous disease and the vast majority (93.1%) disagreed that infection with the virus is associated with stigma. Agreeableness was high among the Egyptians, extraversion and openness to experience were high among Saudi Arabians, while emotional stability was high among Sudanese participants.

Conclusion: Individuals with high conscientiousness, extraversion, and emotional stability demonstrated lower levels of perceived stress during the pandemic. This highlights that for the development of stress management interventions during epidemics; it is crucial to take personality traits into consideration.

1. Introduction

The newly emerged pandemic of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is the biggest public health emergency since the 2nd world war. It is a severe acute respiratory syndrome which has spread at lightning speed due to close social connectedness and travelling from place to place within few hours (He, Deng, & Li, 2020). Besides, COVID-19 is a disaster chain which enables us to study the ability of individuals, populations, governmental institutions to respond to the severe psychological shock resulted from infection, lockdown, social distancing, and economic collapse. (El-Monsoled et al., 2022; Jeronimus, 2020).

It is known that Covid-19 is the second Coronavirus outbreak that affects the Middle East region, following the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) which was reported in Saudi Arabia during 2012. The first country in the Middle East Arab country to record a positive case of COVID-19 following the Wuhan city COVID-19 outbreak in China was United Arab Emirates (Reyad, 2020). As per World Health Organization’s (WHO) Situation Report of 15 August 2020, all Arab region countries have reported COVID-19 cases, the total confirmed cases in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, and Jordan were 295902, 96220, 12211, and 1329 respectively (WHO, 2020).

Numerous stressors have been reported following the pandemic, including health, financial, and relationship issues due to isolation and changes in responsibilities at home and work. Stress has been sweeping all people worldwide due to quarantine struggles and dip moods which eventually, can lead to chronic stress and depressive symptoms (Dryhurst et al., 2020; El-Monsoled, El-Adl, Ali, & Loutfy, 2021). Stress is defined as the response of an individual to internal or external threats (Lecić-Toševski, Vuković, & Stepanović, 2011). Pearson’s appraisal of a stressor as threatening or non-threatening and abilities to cope determine the perceived stress of an individual. Therefore, personality is a factor which can affect stress appraisal and responses (Liu, Lithopoulos, Zhang, Garcia-Barrera, & Rhodes, 2021).

Personality determines the individual’s lasting patterns of emotion,
behavior, and cognition that discriminate one person from another. The Five-Factor Model is a highly influential model which describes personality, it includes neuroticism (e.g., tendency to be emotionally unstable, and experience feelings such as fear, worry, and anxiety), conscientiousness (e.g., tendency to be organized, responsible, goal-directed, and hard-working.), extraversion (e.g., tendency to be positive, sociable, with a high activity level, and assertive), openness (e.g., tendency to be creative, perceptive, appreciate fantasy, reflective and aesthetics), and agreeableness (e.g., tendency to be cooperative, kind, trust worthy, altruistic, and generous) (Buecker, Maes, Denissen, & Luhmann, 2020).

To our knowledge, no studies have examined the association of personality traits and perceived stress towards the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, the previous studies have proved an association between personality traits and various kinds of behaviors. They demonstrated that personality has a substantial impact on cooperative behavior, such as helping group members and following group rules. Personality traits are also associated with health behavior; individuals with high neuroticism score are often worried about their health (Abdelrahman, 2020; Elstrup, Epløv, Pisinger, & Jørgensen, 2011; Joyner, Rhodes, & Loprinzi, 2018; van Dijk et al., 2016). In accordance, another study reported that persons with low score on openness to experience, extraversion, and agreeableness tend more to avoid infectious diseases (Mortensen, Becker, Ackerman, Neuberg, & Kenrick, 2010).

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic is a powerful natural experiment to study individual and societal differences in the experience, responses, changes, and outcomes of this disaster chain. Besides, COVID-19 is a transformative collective experience that influences every aspect of life, via stress and personal threat, ambiguity, prolonged social isolation, and transformative collective experience that influences every aspect of life, changes, and outcomes of this disaster chain. Besides, COVID-19 is a transformative collective experience that influences every aspect of life, via stress and personal threat, ambiguity, prolonged social isolation, and the most severe economic recession in a century, which shall have a lasting impact on our lives (Jeronimus, 2020). Thus, to develop personal stress management as nursing interventions during the pandemic, it is critical for the mental health nurse to understand the mediators between personality, risk perception, and perceived stress. Therefore, it is deemed to conduct this study to assess personality traits, perceived stress, and perception toward COVID-19 among Arab population.

2. Aim of the study

The study was conducted to assess personality traits, perceived stress, and perception toward COVID-19 among Arab population.

3. Methods

3.1. Study design

An Internet-based self-administered questionnaire of closed-ended questions was used. It followed the guidelines for reporting Observational Studies: Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) Statement.

3.2. Participants

A sample of 948 adults form different Arabic nationalities was included in the study by a non-random convenience sample followed by a snowball technique.

3.3. Eligibility criteria

Both genders of adult Arab populations aged 18 years or more, people who are familiar in using social media, capable of reading and understanding their native language (Arabic), and who have a free medical history regarding COVID-19 but are living in infected geographical areas with a varying severity were included. The authors excluded people who are known to have psychiatric disorders.

3.4. Measures

Data were collected anonymously through an online semi-structured Arabic questionnaire created using Google Forms™, valid link for three weeks, and consisted of the following four sections including a consent form for all respondents.

I- Socio-demographic and Personal Characteristics: including gender, age, marital status, having children, residence, nationality, level of education, employment status, family income, presence of any chronic diseases, presence of any psychiatric disorders, if any family member was infected with COVID-19 or one of respondents’ friends, relatives or neighbors, and what are the sources of the respondents’ knowledge regarding COVID-19.

II- The Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI): This is a quick and brief assessment of the Big Five personality dimensions: (1) Extraversion, (2) Agreeableness, (3) Conscientiousness, (4) Emotional Stability, and (5) Openness to Experience. The inventory begins with the stem “I see myself as:” followed by ten pairs of trait descriptors, which participants rate on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “1, strongly disagree” to “7, strongly disagree” (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swan, 2003).

III- The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): This is a validated 14-item Likert type which assessed the extent that individuals believe their lives are overloaded, unpredictable, and uncontrollable over the past month. Respondents rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale (0 never, 4 very often), with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The PSS has strong psychometric properties in diverse populations and has been shown to have good predictive validity in studies relating to conspiracy beliefs (Swami et al., 2016). This tool was translated into Arabic and validated in a sample of US Arab immigrants (Jaber, Brown, Hammad, Zhu, & Herman, 2003).

IV- Perception toward COVID-19 Questionnaire: This is a 5-item Likert scale was developed by the authors based on current scientific literature through selecting a set of main ideas and primary items directly relevant to COVID-19 (Abdelhaziz et al., 2020; El-Monsed, Amr, Ali, Elmasry, & Zoromba, 2021; Ferdous, 2020; Huynh, 2020; Karasneh et al., 2020; Niepel, Kranz, Borgonovi, Emslander, & Greiff, 2020; Olapega et al., 2020). Responses of each item were rated on 3-point Likert scale as follows disagree, neutral, and agree.

3.5. Questionnaire’s translation, its validity, and reliability

Firstly, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic language following the forward and back translation procedure, being customized to be suitable for the Arabic culture. Secondly, the study questionnaire was sent to the seven experts in the field of nursing and medical psychiatry and public health to give their feedback regarding its importance, validity, and reliability. Thirdly, researchers carried out a pilot study on a small sample of nurses (n = 30) and after getting into discussions with them, they recommended that the questionnaire should be shorter, simpler, clearer, and more comprehensible. The pilot study enabled the researchers to improve the reliability, as well as to achieve a degree of the content and construct validity, by clarifying measurement fit and specifying content in different constructs (Neuman, 2014). The pilot study data were not used in the final analysis. The reliability coefficient was calculated by SPSS v.23 and the value of Cronbach’s alpha was found to be 0.81, 0.83, and 0.73 for TIPI, PSS, and Perception toward COVID-19 Questionnaire, respectively.

3.6. Procedure

An internet-based survey was used in the study due to the inability to
use the face to face communication as per the international response strategy to mitigate the COVID-19 spread. The obscure online survey link was sent through emails and shared on the most common used social networking sites (Facebook and WhatsApp) within three weeks (24th June to 15th July 2020). The authors get respondents to send the survey to their companies (snowball technique). The average completion time of the survey was 8–10 min.

3.7. Ethics approval and consent to participate

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Buraydah Colleges in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Session No. 4/402). Then, the population who were included in the eligibility criteria and were directed to fill the informed consent could open the link and participate in the study. No monetary rewards were given for completing the questionnaire.

3.8. Statistical analysis

The SPSS v.23 was used for data analysis. All the categorical data are summarized as percentages and frequencies. The data normality was tested with a one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Continuous variables are presented as Mean ± Standard Deviation (SD) for parametric data. The two groups were compared with Student t test and means of more than two groups were compared with analysis of variance (ANOVA) test and Post-Hoc Multiple Comparison. Pearson correlation test was used to correlate between continuous parametric data. Linear regression analysis was used to “predict” the value of the dependent variable (perceived stress) based upon the values of independent variables (Big Five personality dimensions). Results were considered significant when the probability of error was less than 5 % ($p < 0.05$), and highly significant when the probability of error was less than 0.1 % ($p < 0.001$).

4. Results

Among the 948 participants, approximately-two-fifth (40.1 %) of the respondents aged between 20 and 30 years and more than two thirds (71 %) were females. Also, approximately-three-quarters (74.8 %) of the surveyed respondents lived in urban areas, 52 % were single, 29.2 % were Egyptians, and 26.2 % were Saudi Arabian. Two thirds of the participants obtained higher than secondary education. Less than one-third (29.9 %) of the respondents were working in the medical field and 45.6 % of them had relatives or acquaintances infected with COVID-19.

The Big Five personality dimensions and perceived stress had statistically significant relation with age, marital status, and occupation ($P \leq 0.05$). Extraversion, conscientiousness, and emotional stability were significantly higher in respondents aged>30 years. Agreeableness was significantly lower in respondents aged less than 20 years. Openness to experience and perceived stress were significantly lower in respondents aged>40 years. In contrary, perceived stress was significantly higher in single and students’ respondents.

Agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience were significantly higher in female respondents. Besides, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability was significantly higher in respondents from urban areas, while perceived stress was significantly higher in respondents from rural areas. With respect to the nationality, agreeableness was significantly higher in Egyptians, whereas conscientiousness and openness to experience were significantly higher in Saudi Arabians. Emotional stability was significantly higher in Sudanese, and perceived stress was significantly lower in Sudanese and significantly higher in respondents from other nationalities.

Concerning the income, respondents with unsatisfactory income had significant low scores of emotional stability and significant high scores of perceived stress. Extraversion, emotional stability, and openness to experience were significantly higher in respondents who were working in medical field, while perceived stress was significantly lower among them. Respondents who had relatives or acquaintances infected with COVID-19 showed significant low scores of emotional stability and significant high scores of perceived stress (Table 1).

More than three-quarters (76.1 %) thought that COVID-19 is a dangerous disease and 63.1 % were concerned about the possibility of getting infected. The vast majority (93.1 %) of the participants disagreed that infection with the virus is associated with stigma, while, around one-third (32.6 %) agreed that “Nothing I do can stop the risk of catching me” and more than two fifth (43.8 %) reported that the pandemic will pass quickly (Table 2).

The results of Pearson correlation test show a statistically significant negative correlation between all Big Five personality dimensions and perceived stress ($P \leq 0.05$; Table 3). The last table depicts the unstandardized and standardized coefficients for the regression analyses. The regression was significant ($F = 73.609, P < 0.001$), accounting for 27 % of the variance in perceived stress ($R^2 = 0.27$). Greater levels of extraversion, conscientiousness, and emotional stability were significantly related to less perceived stress (Table 4).

5. Discussion

The study aimed to assess personality traits, perceived stress, and perception toward COVID-19 among Arab populations. To achieve this; data were collected from 984 participants in different Arab countries (Egypt, KSA, Sudanese Jordan, and others). When we asked our respondents about their perceptions regarding COVID-19, more than three-quarters believed that COVID-19 is a hazardous disease and 63.1 % were concerned about the possibility of getting infected with COVID-19. Other positive findings were that the vast majority of respondents disagreed that infection with the virus is associated with stigma. These results may be due to the effectiveness of the message provided by the different media platforms, which launched an extensive media campaign to raise awareness of the all issues of COVID-19. In addition, 45.6 % of the studied respondents had relatives or acquaintances infected with COVID-19. This result played an important role in exaggerating the danger and spread of the disease. These findings coincide with another study on 384 Egyptians who believed that COVID 19 is a life-threatening danger and who expressed concern for the possible risk of infection of any member of their family. In addition, about 23 % of participants thought that infection of the virus is associated with stigma (Abdelhafiz et al., 2020). Moreover, high perceived susceptibility and severities (89 % and 97 %, respectively) were reported in Hong Kong (Kwok et al., 2020). In previous pandemics, increased severity and threat of coronavirus infection was highly perceived in respondents with respiratory, health-related issues, or in relation with coronavirus (Leung et al., 2004). In contrary, another study demonstrated low perceived susceptibility (45 %) and severity (40 %) in the Sudanese population (Nasir & Almahdi, 2020).

Our results reported that greater levels of extraversion, conscientiousness, and emotional stability were significantly related to less perceived stress. It is known that extraverts look for opportunities to engage with others and seek out social stimulation. Moreover, the well-established relationship between perceived well-being and extraversion are mediated through the social connectedness (Lee, Dean, & Jung, 2008; Raad, 2000). Consequently, the ability of extraverts to fulfill this social connectedness can be predicted by conscientiousness, while compliance with social norms for specific health behaviors are predicted by healthy measures engagement of the COVID-19 pandemic. Health-promoting and risk-avoiding behavior outside the context of pandemic can be predicted by conscientiousness, while compliance with social norms for specific health behaviors are predicted by
Table 1A

| Socio-demographic Factors | N (%) | Extraversion | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Emotional Stability | Openness to Experience | Perceived Stress |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
|                           |       | M (SD)       | Test of Sig.  | M (SD)            | Test of Sig.        | M (SD)                 | Test of Sig.    |
| Age > 20                  | 152   | 4.4          | **             | 4.8               | **              | 5.1                    | **             |
|                           | (16)  | (1.4)ab      | 15.09         | (1.3)ac           | 6.187             | (1.3)ab                 | 7.194          |
| 20 - (<30) 20             | 380   | 4.2          | ***            | 5.1               | ***            | 6.0                    | ***            |
|                           | (46.1)| (1.3)bd       | 18.97         | (1.2)bc           | 5.4             | (1.4)                  | 4.6            |
| 30 - (<40) 20             | 185   | 4.9          | ***            | 5.1               | ***            | 5.0                    | ***            |
|                           | (19.5)| (1.4)ae       | 11.68         | (1.3)de           | 5.5             | (1.3)ae                 | 4.9            |
| ≥ 40                      | 243   | 4.9          | ***            | 5.6               | **              | 4.4                    | **             |
|                           | (24.4)| (1.3)bf       | 19.13         | (1.3)ef           | 5.1             | (1.3)bf                 | 4.4            |
| Gender Male               | 275   | 4.6          | **             | 4.8               | **              | 4.8                    | **             |
|                           | (29)  | (1.3)        | 10.77         | (1.4)             | 5.1             | (1.4)                  | 4.4            |
| Female                    | 673   | 4.5          | ***            | 5.2               | ***            | 5.4                    | ***            |
|                           | (71)  | (1.4)        | 9.03          | (1.3)             | 5.4             | (1.3)                  | 5.0            |
| Residence Urban           | 799   | 4.6          | **             | 5.2               | **              | 5.4                    | **             |
|                           | (74.8)| (1.4)        | 14.66         | (1.4)             | 5.1             | (1.4)                  | 5.0            |
| Rural                     | 239   | 4.4          | ***            | 4.8               | ***            | 4.9                    | ***            |
|                           | (25.2)| (1.3)        | 10.1          | (1.3)             | 5.0             | (1.3)                  | 4.4            |
| Marital Status Single     | 493   | 4.3          | ***            | 4.7               | **              | 4.8                    | ***            |
|                           | (52)  | (1.4)        | 10.66         | (1.4)             | 5.3             | (1.4)                  | 4.9            |
| Married                   | 426   | 4.8          | ***            | 5.3               | **              | 4.9                    | ***            |
|                           | (44.9)| (1.4)        | 10.66         | (1.3)             | 5.3             | (1.3)                  | 4.9            |
| Widow/ Divorced           | 29    | 5.1          | **             | 4.2               | **              | 4.8                    | **             |
|                           | (3.1) | (1.3)        | 9.03          | (1.2)             | 5.1             | (1.1)                  | 4.2            |

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
*M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Test of Sig. = Test of Significance; t = Student t test; F = ANOVA test
a,b,c,d,e,f,g = Significant difference between groups by Post-Hoc Multiple Comparison

Table 1B

| Socio-demographic Factors | N (%) | Extraversion | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Emotional Stability | Openness to Experience | Perceived Stress |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
|                           |       | M (SD)       | Test of Sig.  | M (SD)            | Test of Sig.        | M (SD)                 | Test of Sig.    |
| Having Children Yes       | 404   | 4.8          | **             | 5.2               | **              | 5.4                    | **             |
|                           | (42.6)| (1.4)        | 5.89          | (1.2)             | 2.34             | (1.3)                  | 1.48            |
| No                        | 544   | 4.3          | ***            | 5.1               | ***            | 5.2                    | ***            |
|                           | (57.4)| (1.4)        | 9.03          | (1.3)             | 2.43             | (1.4)                  | 1.48            |
| Nationality Egyptian      | 277   | 4.5          | **             | 4.9               | **              | 5.1                    | **             |
|                           | (29.2)| (1.3)        | 8.013         | (1.2)             | 7.323            | (1.3)                  | 1.986          |
| Saudi Arabian             | 248   | 4.5          | **             | 5.4               | **              | 5.7                    | **             |
|                           | (26.3)| (1.3)        | 9.03          | (1.2)             | 5.5             | (1.2)                  | 4.672          |
| Sudanese                  | 163   | 4.7          | **             | 5.2               | **              | 5.3                    | **             |
|                           | (17.2)| (1.4)        | 11.68         | (1.4)             | 5.3             | (1.4)                  | 4.833          |
| Jordanian                 | 179   | 4.6          | **             | 5.2               | **              | 5.3                    | **             |
|                           | (18.9)| (1.4)        | 11.68         | (1.4)             | 5.3             | (1.4)                  | 4.733          |
| Others                    | 81    | 4.2          | **             | 4.7               | **              | 5.1                    | **             |
|                           | (8.5) | (1.7)        | 11.68         | (1.3)             | 5.2             | (1.1)                  | 4.1             |
| Education > Secondary     | 60    | 4.8          | **             | 5.1               | **              | 5.6                    | **             |
|                           | (6.4) | (1.4)        | 8.013         | (1.2)             | 2.123            | (1.4)                  | 1.297          |
| Secondary                 | 264   | 4.3          | **             | 5.2               | **              | 5.3                    | **             |
|                           | (27.8)| (1.3)        | 9.03          | (1.2)             | 5.3             | (1.3)                  | 4.6             |
| < Secondary               | 624   | 4.6          | **             | 5.2               | **              | 5.3                    | **             |
|                           | (65.8)| (1.3)        | 9.03          | (1.2)             | 5.3             | (1.3)                  | 4.633          |
| Occupation Student        | 368   | 4.2          | **             | 5.1               | **              | 4.2                    | **             |
|                           | (38.8)| (1.3)        | 11.68         | (1.4)             | 4.42             | (1.3)                  | 14.16          |
| Private Work              | 218   | 4.9          | **             | 5.1               | **              | 4.2                    | **             |
|                           | (23)  | (1.3)        | 11.68         | (1.2)             | 5.4             | (1.3)                  | 4.233          |
| Governmental              | 208   | 4.6          | **             | 5.2               | **              | 4.8                    | **             |
|                           | (21.9)| (1.3)        | 11.68         | (1.2)             | 5.4             | (1.3)                  | 4.233          |
| Employee                  | 154   | 4.6          | **             | 5.5               | **              | 4.4                    | **             |
|                           | (16.2)| (1.4)        | 9.03          | (1.2)             | 5.5             | (1.4)                  | 4.7             |

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
*M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Test of Sig. = Test of Significance; t = Student t test; F = ANOVA test
a,b,c,d,e,f,g = Significant difference between groups by Post-Hoc Multiple Comparison
behavioral change (Blagov, 2020; Jeronimus, 2020; Lahey, 2009; Malouff, Thorsteinsson, & Schutte, 2006). Also, another study demonstrated that individuals with high levels in extraversion tend to have greater global self-efficacy, experience low stress, and evaluate their health and lives more positive (Aschwanden et al., 2020). Another

Table 1C
Big Five Personality Dimensions and Perceived Stress among Study Respondents and their Variation with the Socio-demographic Factors (N = 948).

| Socio-demographic Factors | N (%) | Extraversion | Agreableness | Conscientiousness | Emotional Stability | Openness to Experience | Perceived Stress |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
|                           | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) |
| Income                    |       |           |           |       |       |       |       |
| Satisfactory              | 758 (80) | 4.6 (1.4) | 5.1 (1.3) | -0.182 | 5.3 (1.3) | 1.76 | 4.6 (1.3) | 3.56 (1.3) | 5 (1.3) | 1.33 | 24.7 (6) | 26.88 |
| Unsatisfactory            | 190 (20) | 4.4 (1.3) | 5.2 (1.3) | **       | 5.2 (1.3) | 1.82 | 4.2 (1.4) | 2.42 (1.4) | 5.2 | 3.27 | 23.4 (8) | 25.7 |
| Work in Medical Field     |       |           |           |       |       |       |       |
| Yes                       | 283 (29.9) | 4.7 (1.2) | 5.2 (1.2) | 1.18 | 5.4 (1.2) | 1.82 | 4.6 (1.2) | 2.42 (1.3) | 5.2 | 3.27 | 23.4 (8) | 25.7 |
| No                        | 665 (70.1) | 4.5 (1.3) | 5.1 (1.3) | **       | 5.3 (1.3) | 1.82 | 4.4 (1.4) | 2.42 (1.3) | 5.2 | 3.27 | 23.4 (8) | 25.7 |
| Having Chronic Diseases   |       |           |           |       |       |       |       |
| Yes                       | 131 (13.8) | 4.8 (1.3) | 5.4 (1.3) | 2.51 | 5.6 (1.3) | 2.57 | 4.5 (1.5) | -0.23 (1.5) | 4.9 | 0.07 | 24.9 (10) | 24.9 |
| No                        | 817 (86.2) | 4.5 (1.4) | 5.1 (1.4) | **       | 5.3 (1.3) | 1.82 | 4.5 (1.3) | 2.42 (1.3) | 5.2 | 3.27 | 23.4 (8) | 25.7 |
| Family Member Infected    |       |           |           |       |       |       |       |
| Yes                       | 53 (5.6) | 4.5 (1.2) | 5.1 (1.2) | **       | 5.5 (1.2) | 1.005 | 4.2 (1.2) | 1.62 (1.1) | 4.9 | 0.07 | 24.9 (10) | 24.9 |
| No                        | 895 (94.4) | 4.5 (1.4) | 5.1 (1.4) | **       | 5.5 (1.3) | 1.005 | 4.5 (1.3) | 2.42 (1.3) | 5.2 | 3.27 | 23.4 (8) | 25.7 |
| Relative or acquaintance  |       |           |           |       |       |       |       |
| Infected                  | 432 (45.6) | 4.5 (1.5) | 5.2 (1.5) | 2.39 | 5.5 (1.3) | 0.787 | 4.2 (1.2) | -0.23 (1.3) | 4.9 | 0.07 | 24.9 (10) | 24.9 |
| No                        | 516 (54.4) | 4.6 (1.3) | 4.1 (1.3) | **       | 5.3 (1.3) | 1.39 | 4.6 (1.3) | 2.42 (1.3) | 5.2 | 3.27 | 23.4 (8) | 25.7 |

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; t = Student t test

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics on COVID-19-related Risk Perception (N = 948).

| Statements                                    | Agree N (%) | Neutral N (%) | Disagree N (%) |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| I think that COVID-19 is dangerous            | 721 (76.1)  | 134 (14.1)    | 93 (9.8)       |
| I am concerned about the possibility that I or another family member can get infected with this virus | 598 (63.1)  | 125 (13.2)    | 225 (23.7)     |
| Infection with the virus is associated with stigma | 22 (2.3)    | 43 (4.5)      | 883 (93.1)     |
| Nothing I do can stop the risk of catching me | 309 (32.6)  | 193 (20.4)    | 446 (47)       |
| The COVID-19 pandemic will pass quickly       | 415 (43.8)  | 321 (33.9)    | 212 (22.4)     |

COVID-19 = Coronavirus disease 2019

Table 3
Pearson Correlation between Big Five Personality Dimensions and Perceived Stress.

| Big Five Personality | Perceived Stress |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Dimensions           | M (SD) | r     |
| Extraversion         | 4.58 (1.43) | -0.246*** |
| Agreeableness        | 5.18 (1.3) | -0.096* |
| Conscientiousness    | 5.35 (1.36) | -0.29*** |
| Emotional Stability  | 4.52 (1.38) | -0.49*** |
| Openness to Experience | 4.98 (1.35) | -0.121*** |
| Perceived Stress     | 24.37 (7.86) | —     |

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; r = Pearson correlation.

agreeableness. Health and risk behavioral liability (neuroticism) might result in susceptibility of people to “fear appeals” (dire warnings) for behavioral change (Blagov, 2020; Jeronimus, 2020; Lahey, 2009; Malouff, Thorsteinsson, & Schutte, 2006). Also, another study demonstrated that individuals with high levels in extraversion tend to have greater global self-efficacy, experience low stress, and evaluate their health and lives more positive (Aschwanden et al., 2020). Another

German study on 1609 participants showed high degree of neuroticism in people with more negative effect in their daily lives during the pandemic, these effects were stronger in participants experienced health threats and with socio-demographic variables (Kroencke, Geukes, Utesch, Kuper, & Back, 2020).

In contrary, (Liu et al., 2021) studied whether perceived threat of COVID-19 and the efficacy to prevent the disease mediates the relationships between perceived stress and personality traits. The authors reported an association of higher neuroticism and extroversion (activity and sociability) with higher levels of stress during COVID-19 pandemic and the stress levels increased grammatically compared to the levels before the pandemic. Besides, another study reported that the pandemic severity had no effect on the well-being of the participants who were open to new experiences and conscientious (Zhang, Wang, Lynn, Zhang, Liu, & Luo, 2020).

5.1. Limitations of the study

First, the snowball sampling strategy was used due to time-sensitivity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the limited available resources. Therefore, the participants did not reflect the actual pattern of the general population because this strategy was not based on a random selection.
Second, during our study, data were collected from 984 participants in different Arab countries (Egypt, KSA, Sudanese Jordan, and others). Therefore, our findings may not accurately reflect each nation’s perception toward COVID-19. Third, the study was only restricted to people with internet access, thus limiting generalizability due to the inability to explore population with no network devices.

6. Conclusion
The present study concluded that individuals with high conscientiousness, extraversion, and emotional stability demonstrated lower levels of perceived stress during the pandemic. This highlights that for the development of stress management interventions during epidemics; it is crucial to take personality traits into consideration. Psychological nursing interventions are needed for the suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases, families, and friends of patients, health care professionals, and the public.

7. Implications for practice
- Nurses play an important role in prevention and management of COVID-19. Through rigorous and precise patient education, case identification, and contact tracing, the disease can be largely contained. Nurses are also taking part in clinical trials to examine a variety of therapeutic options.
- Individual stress management and adaptability can be aided by effective communication skills, positive feedback, and easy access to nurses.
- Governmental policy and funding solutions will be crucial in managing the effects of the pandemic’s pressures, disruptions, and losses.
- Psychoeducation about stress management techniques has become more essential in recent years.
- Peer group programs that combine face-to-face and online sessions; home visiting prioritized for individuals and families without reliable digital access; face-to-face interaction prioritized where virtual contact interferes with micro-communication; and expansion of the available workforce by including those who are unable to work full-time, site-based, or home visiting due to other commitments or restrictions.

Declaration of Competing Interest
The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgements
We would like to acknowledge and thank all participants in the current study for their valuable time.

Authors’ contributions
SMT, EDM, and AHEL conceived and designed the study. SMT and EDM conducted literature review. AHEL designed the questionnaire. SMT, EDM, and AHEL collected the data through online survey. AHEL analyzed and interpreted data. SMT, EDM, and AHEL drafted the manuscript. SMT and AHEL, critically revised the manuscript. All authors approved the final manuscript before submission.

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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