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## Dimensionality and Measurement Invariance of the Serbian Version of the BDI-II: An IRT Approach\*

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There have been debates about the dimensionality of the Beck's Depression Inventory-II, its appropriate scoring, and gender-related measurement invariance. We addressed these questions employing the Item Response Theory approach in a clinical sample of 288 patients, using a Serbian version of the BDI-II. We tested nine structural models using confirmatory Full Information Factor Analysis and IRT Graded Response Model. We concluded that the BDI-II is essentially unidimensional. All items had high discrimination, and the test was most informative in the medium range of depression severity in the clinical sample. Although small to medium gender related differential item functioning existed in several items, it did not affect the total score. Hence, the total score of the Serbian translation of the BDI-II is comparable between genders as a measure of severity of depression.

*Keywords:* depression, BDI-II, Item Response Theory, Differential Item Functioning, gender differences

### Highlights:

- The Serbian version of the BDI-II has essentially unidimensional structure.
- The BDI-II is highly informative for measuring depression in clinical samples.
- Small to moderate DIF exists in items measuring vegetative symptoms and crying.
- Severity of depression, as the total BDI-II score, is comparable between genders.

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## Relationship between Emotional Reactivity to Visual Stimuli and Basic Personality Traits\*

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Two studies with the same goal, but different instruments, investigated the correlation between basic personality traits and electrodermal reactivity to aversive visual stimuli. Study 1 focused on the Five Factor Model traits, while in Study 2, we investigated the HEXACO model, and an additional trait, Disintegration. In Study 1, emotional reactivity was expressed using Polyscore, a composite polygraph measure in which electrodermal response (EDR) had the largest weight, and it was measured with respect to stimuli with positive, neutral, and negative valences. In Study 2, we employed several measures of EDR to stimuli with negative valence. In both experiments, Conscientiousness correlated positively with EDR to aversive stimuli. Additionally, in Study 2, there was a negative correlation between Disintegration and EDR to aversive stimuli. Other traits were not related to EDR to aversive stimuli, and, in Study 1, we found no relationship between personality traits and reactivity to stimuli with positive or neutral valence.

*Keywords:* Five Factor model, HEXACO, Disintegration, electrodermal reaction, polygraph

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**Highlights:**

- Conscientiousness was linked to higher electrodermal reactivity to aversive stimuli.
- Conscientiousness may also be linked to higher EDR to neutral & positive stimuli.
- Disintegration was linked to lower EDR to aversive stimuli in Study 2.
- Other traits did not reliably correlate with electrodermal reactivity.
- Two studies produced consistent results despite using different instruments.

# Looking at a Beautiful Moon While Immersed in a Lake of Petroleum: Narratives from Italian Individuals with Hikikomori\*

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This study aimed at exploring the hikikomori experience of Italian young adults to detect some psychosocial patterns of hikikomori. A phenomenological analysis was conducted on the narratives of 17 individuals with hikikomori (9 men, 18–39 aged), who posted their stories of social isolation via an online forum. The analysis detected ten themes synthesizing the psychological structure of the participants’ lived experience, which were grouped into three overarching areas respectively dealing with passive identity, early traumatic experiences, and refusal of social participation. Overall, the findings support the psychosocial developmental theory of hikikomori about the reactivation of past insecure attachments and the anxiety associated with novelty and challenge. Limitations, suggestions for future research and clinical implications for individuals with hikikomori and their families are briefly discussed.

*Keywords:* Hikikomori, Narrative, Psychiatry, Social withdrawal, Phenomenological Analysis

## Highlights:

- A phenomenological analysis of hikikomori stories was conducted.
- The study confirmed several patterns characterizing hikikomori cross-nationally.
- The findings support the psychosocial developmental theory of hikikomori.

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# The First Wave of the COVID–19 Pandemic: HEXACO Profiles Affect Coping Mechanisms and Adaptability of Response\*

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Our primary objective was to investigate whether HEXACO personality profiles predict different coping strategies during the first wave of the COVID–19 pandemic. We chose a person-centered approach as it enabled visibility of personal structures differentiating between adaptive and maladaptive coping in a nonclinical sample. Latent profile analysis identified three distinct personality profiles, each profile complemented by its specific choice of coping strategies. The Resilient (conscientious extroverts) used strategies focused on the stressor (Problem-focused, Emotion-focused coping, and Humor); the Undercontrolled (conscienceless) turned to Avoidance of problem-solving strategies; the Overcontrolled (emotionally reactive and conscientious introverts) avoided Humor and handling of their own emotions. Combination of Conscientiousness scores differentiated between adaptive and maladaptive resilience. However, high Emotionality in conjunction with Introversion and high Conscientiousness produced both vulnerability and maladaptation. Absence of Avoidance is the paramount feature of adaptive resilience. Thus, personality related variance in stress response is mostly determined by traits responsible for control, proactivity, and affectivity.

*Keywords:* COVID–19 pandemic fears, HEXACO, latent profile analysis, coping strategies

## Highlights:

- Three distinct HEXACO profiles were identified by the latent profile analysis.
- Profiles were differentiated by Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Emotionality.
- Each HEXACO profile predicted its specific coping strategies.

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- Emotionality lead to vulnerability and maladaptation.
- Proclivity for reciprocal behavior did not distinguish between personality types.

## Activity Matters: Physical Exercise and Stress Coping During the 2020 COVID–19 State of Emergency\*

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Recent studies have demonstrated that social isolation during the 2020 COVID–19 pandemic has significantly impacted the mental and physical health of people worldwide. However, it remains unknown whether physical activity can improve mental health in a state of emergency. The present study aimed to examine the importance of physical exercising and stress management mechanisms (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant) in the context of mental health indicators (depression, anxiety, and nonspecific stress) in conditions of social isolation during COVID–19-induced lockdown in Serbia. The sample consisted of 680 adults (66% female), mean aged 35.91 years ( $SD = 12.45$ ). The results indicated a significant relation between physical exercising and a reduced stress response and confirmed the usefulness of the already well-known problem-focused strategies. Avoidant and emotion-focused coping were associated with poorer mental health outcomes. However, as a moderator, physical activity lowered anxiety levels in individuals prone to emotion-focused coping.

*Keywords:* physical activity, COVID–19-induced lockdown, stress coping, mental health

### Highlights:

- Avoidant and problem-focused coping were significantly related to mental health during COVID–19-induced lockdown in Serbia.
- The effects of emotion-focused coping strategies were moderated by the level of physical activity.
- Promoting physical exercise (at home and in public spaces) during lockdown might prevent mental health issues.

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## Pandemic Parenting: Predictors of Quality of Parental Pandemic Practices during COVID–19 Lockdown in Serbia\*

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The aim of our study was to explore relations between parents' and children's fear of COVID–19, parents' dispositions (emotion regulation, self-efficacy, the anxiety trait) and their distress (due to the pandemic, the national state of emergency [NSE] and curfews) and how these variables have been affecting the quality of parental pandemic practices during the COVID–19 NSE in Serbia. Our online questionnaire was filled in by 376 parents and one of their children aged 7 to 19 years. Path analysis was used to analyze data. Higher levels of cognitive reappraisal and self-efficacy directly contribute to a higher quality of parental pandemic practices during NSE. Indirectly, parents' fear, pandemic distress, and parents' cognitive anxiety symptoms increase children's fear, consequently raising the quality of parental pandemic practices. Pointing out protective and risk factors that may affect pandemic parenting during NSE as well as mechanisms of their contributions, our findings draw attention to the importance of parents' negative emotions regulation and the effects of children's emotions on the quality of parental pandemic practices during an ongoing pandemic.

*Keywords:* quality of parental pandemic practices, fear of COVID–19, pandemic distress, emotion regulation, parental sense of self-efficacy

### Highlights:

- Children's age, parent's fear of COVID–19, their sense of self-efficacy, and quality of parental pandemic practices during ongoing pandemic predict children's fear of COVID–19. Indirectly, pandemic distress and parents'

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cognitive anxiety symptoms affect children's fear of COVID-19 through parents' fear of COVID-19.

- Predictors of parents' fear of COVID-19 are distress due to the pandemic, distress due to the national state of emergency and parental cognitive anxiety.
- Children's fear of COVID-19 is moderately and positively correlated with parents' fear of COVID-19.
- During the pandemic and the national state of emergency, the quality of parental pandemic practices was directly associated with parents' sense of self-efficacy and their ability to regulate their emotions.
- Children's fear positively predicts the quality of parental pandemic practices; if children were more afraid of COVID-19, the quality of parenting practices related to pandemic would increase.