

The Mental Health affects following COVID-19

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Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic of 2019-present, has impacted all of our lives one way or another. COVID-19 is now a major part of history and will be taught to the new generations as a time of isolation and uncertainty in the world. As we all experienced our world changing in the blink of an eye, we had no choice but to adapt to the “new normal.” It is likely we each experienced very similar days conforming to all the changes yet we were all still in the dark about the severity of COVID cases. However, this topic has so much meaning because of how it affected us, as a country, mentally and physically. The pandemic greatly impacted individuals' mental state. These long months, which eventually turned into years, consisted of masks, online meetings, closed businesses, food and toiletry shortages, etc. Previous studies show the incline of anxiety, depression, and anti-socialness within the country stems from the pandemic.

Mental health can be greatly impacted by the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, yet it is not discussed enough. Through this study we can take a deeper look as to what factors caused an increase in depression and anxiety. The isolation, no face-to-face interactions, not seeing family and friends, and the scary news exposure are all factors that played a role. Doing this research and gathering these findings brings a sense of explanation to everyone who was negatively affected. This study may bring a sense of togetherness, showing people they were not alone during their depressive state at the time of the pandemic.

Literature Review

The mental health affects after news exposure of covid-19

When news regarding the Coronavirus pandemic hit in December of 2019, panic came across the entire country resulting in major distress. Worries from people still having jobs to deep concern that your grandparents weren't going to survive the COVID-19 pandemic. At the peak of the virus exposure, we were concerned about food shortages, job loss, childcare, having enough healthcare workers and beds and the people covering the news never had any solutions to any of these problems for months. It is clear from just this information that the rise in distress came from uncertainty. No one could tell us much information at all in the beginning stages which left us all in panic mode for much longer than we thought.

Before news media of the pandemic, It was observed that constant news coverage over other situations made us feel more assured or safe. For example, in situations like major killings, we are updated, new information is constantly being brought to the media and everything is being done to prevent it from continuing. Things headed in a different direction when the pandemic was publicly covered on the news because circumstances were so different. No one knew how or if we could prevent it so we were at a stand-still for several months. We were uneducated for a long period of time not knowing about a vaccine, now knowing how easily it spread, and not knowing if loved ones could survive.

Data shown after news exposure of the fifteen day stay-at-home order was placed in the United States, was released. Following this news, it was announced that the United States, at that time, had the highest infection rate. Researchers were confident that this was the best time to record certain data regarding this hypothesis. Data showed that people who followed the news coverage of COVID-19 very closely due to uncertainty, had a higher psychological distress index by twenty four percent than those who did not follow COVID-19 news media closely.

Researchers concluded that specifically to the pandemic, more news coverage raised threats and concerns than it did any good.

How COVID-19 affects the mental health of grocery store service workers

We may not have realized it at the moment or may still not have realized, but other than healthcare workers, service workers were the other set of jobs who were labeled as “essential workers” all throughout the pandemic. Grocery stores were required to remain open during the chaotic times of the pandemic. When people were clearing shelves in fear we might not have access to them for months. Things like food, paper towels, toilet paper, medicine, etc. Service workers had to remain calm and do their job despite what may have been going on mentally, as it was a time of struggle for all of us as a nation. Healthcare and service industry workers were put at the most risk for this virus and were most likely affected mentally more than others.

There are many factors that were recorded during the time of the pandemic that contribute to retail/service workers being less educated in this area. Healthcare workers are at least familiar with infection spreading as opposed to retail workers. These workers were put at huge risk due to the face-to-face interactions to help service people efficiently. Using a four point scale, retail workers from Arizona surveyed their feelings of anxiety and depression regarding the pandemic at their time of work. Researchers also used “A Four Item Perceived Stress Scale” to study how they assess stressful life situations.

Researchers also wanted to know how safe workers felt in their working environment. Every store put in place new rules, health codes, safety measures, and violations in terms of the pandemic. There was so much more to be aware of and the effects of that played a role in the

psychological stress of these workers. Data did show us that more workers felt safe under their new working conditions. More specific data surveyed showed that a little over sixty two percent of workers felt that their authority figure took necessary precautions in the workplace to ensure safety.

Employee's in this industry overall recorded that 19.4% suffered from severe mental health disorders during and following the time of the pandemic. When workplaces practiced correct and safe covid precautions it resulted in workers feeling more safe which lowered distress in mental health by 1.4 points ranging 0-12. Feeling safe at work was however the only factor that played a role in lowering stress levels in employees.

The COVID-19 pandemic mental health effects and stressors in first year college students

Many factors come into play when discussing what it is that specifically led to the extreme rises in anxiety and depression in college students. Cases were worse for first year college students, like myself when the pandemic hit. Navigating through obstacles that were new and unfamiliar while in the midst of a global pandemic. This research shows the data and factors of mental health in 18-20 year old college students in North Carolina.

Some factors contributing to increased stress levels within students and universities were financial situations caused by COVID-19, as well as the transition from in person classes to online courses. Distance learning and hospitalizations are two other factors contributing to these rises. Research showed that results seem to be dependent on race, ethnicity, gender, and college status. This article describes the surveyed first year college students as vulnerable, as opposed to returning college students, which is what differs this data from previous found research.

Data collected showed that anxiety symptoms in these first year college students went up 40%, going from 18.1%, which were results before the pandemic, to 25.3% after the pandemic. Like the anxiety survey data, researchers collected results from the depression symptoms survey, which had gone up 48% in first year college students. This shows percentages going from 21.5% to 31.7% after the pandemic. Relating to the previous article discussing retail workers, this data was also dependent on where or if these college students had jobs at the time.

Work reductions were not a contribution to the increase in mental health disorders overall. Students doing distance learning were recorded to have three times more anxiety/stress than they did prior to the pandemic. Social isolation played the biggest factor in these survey results. Studies showed that 16.1% of students surveyed said that they developed more severe anxiety than they had pre-pandemic and 17.7% of students surveyed that they developed more severe depression than they had pre-pandemic. Another factor we thought would contribute to lower mental health levels, were positive covid tests and hospitalizations of oneself or family, loved ones, etc. The data recorded shockingly showed us different and these factors did not play a role in the increased rates of depression and/or anxiety.

Does the COVID-19 pandemic impact parents' and adolescents' well-being?

This research dives into how lives were affected all throughout the pandemic rather than when it was just beginning in its prime state. These studies look at the positive and negative effects that the pandemic might have had on parents and their parenting mannerisms or styles. Going a little further, these studies also show us what could have contributed to these changes. It is inevitable that we wouldn't see changes between relatives occurring once families were forced

into the stay-at-home orders time and time again. This brought forced conversation, we were forced to hangout only within our immediate families or who we lived in the same quarters with.

While this experience may bring some families together and help grow those relationships, it doesn't affect every household the same. Many things can cause a person's mood to change negatively, especially being confined to a small space with the same people for days on end. Some factors that can contribute to someone's quick irritability relating to the pandemic are financial issues (typically between the parents), boredom, not being able to do physical activities outside of your home, parents having to homeschool their children due to no face-to-face classes, etc.

Parents have changed their parenting styles during the pandemic and even post-pandemic without realizing the adjustments they had to make during that time because they were necessary. From things like how much they engage with their children, how much support is being given/shown, but this research studies more around the warmth and criticisms families provide. Warmth and criticism are on opposite ends of the spectrum and were what researchers really wanted to put their focus around as these factors are what mainly is affected in families.

Two questionnaires were used to get data for this study, the first one being the "Intolerance of Uncertainty", a twelve item questionnaire. The other assessment researchers did was the "Patient Health Questionnaire", this is often the assessment they use in primary care as well. Data from the first questionnaire shows the negative effects that parents and adolescents faced during the pandemic with their families, the top factors being (1) missing social activities with friends, (2) irritability with family members, (3) concern for the coronavirus in general, and (4) constant news exposure. All these factors resulted in results ranging from 6% to 22% between both groups.

COVID-19 pandemic affects medical students' learning process psychological well-being

Medical students from all over the country were observed and studied just to find the extent to which these students were affected by the uncertainty of the pandemic while learning medical methodology. These medical students included undergraduate and postgraduate students and results were recorded through multiple surveys ranging from learning difficulties to background characteristics. In the midst of the year 2020, just at the peak of the pandemic, these surveys were given.

Like healthcare professionals discussed in one of the articles previously, medical students are exposed and susceptible to the same health risks, dealing closely with the coronavirus but also more vulnerable to the emotional stress/trauma that comes along with it. Where medical students are to be doing labs, classes, hands on learning, etc., it was all replaced with online training for these students due to the rapid spread of COVID. It is a scary idea to know these students had to do much of their studying and learning through online resources because people could simply not be in close contact with one another. This factor alone increases vulnerability for these students and only faces them with more challenges and obstacles to face once their training is completed.

By finding this research on how medical students are affected mentally and physically, researchers can learn what difficulties they face or will come to face in order for us to solve these problems or at least be aware. Students were tested with anxiety and depression screenings, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder screenings. It was recorded that 93.1% of the observed medical students showed symptoms and signs of a mental illness, anxiety and/or depression,

OCD, and PTSD. It was also found that 6.30% were observed to have severe depression while 58.50% suffered from mild depression. When tested on any learning difficulties they faced due to the pandemic 95.7% recorded that they struggled while studying and only 4.3% recorded that they didn't notice much of a difference in learning/studying.

Teachers and School Health Leaders' Perspectives on Distance Learning in Physical Education

With every school and class transitioning to distance or remote learning, learning and managing physical education in the classroom is ten times harder. Teachers struggled with how to teach this information online and ensure students were doing the required assignments. Maintaining physical health is important because as you decline physically, just imagine what it may be doing to you mentally. That is why there was such a push to keep children physically active during the stay-at-home orders.

This study focused on what changes had to be made by physical education teachers and studying their opinions on what made teaching this harder once the pandemic hit. These results were observed through qualitative studies on teachers and professionals from California, covering twenty-one different districts. These qualitative studies were done through interviews in the summer of 2020, shortly after schools had transitioned to online, the previous school year ending in that May. The results revealed a theme of four big key factors that seemed to play a role for each interviewee. These four things are teachers felt that teaching physical education online was critical and could be done, also being creative and intuitive were what became most

helpful, to be successful, educators said professional development, admin support, and equipment would be necessary, and finally that these obstacles taught them lessons for the future.

The effects of gender, educational level, and personality on online learning during COVID-19

This next article dives deeper into online learning and the path to perfecting it for educators. It discusses what factors affect how well we learn online, what may hold you back from excelling remotely. This article studied undergraduate and post-graduate students who had very strong communication and personal skills, very creative, outgoing, and openness to new adventures. Gender was also a topic that was studied as it can sometimes determine how we handle situations. It was found that people who carried more of these traits and others like it, had a more successful experience with remote learning.

Effects of COVID-19 lockdown on parental functioning on vulnerable families

Vulnerable families residing in Norway were chosen to study and participate in finding out how much changed within their household during the pandemic. These families were then put into two different groups, one studying what the household was like before COVID-19 and another group being studied during COVID-19. These results show us what contributed to added stress during the pandemic and what did not affect them.

Results found that pre-existing financial issues were not a contributor to added stress during the lockdown, nor did gender of the parents cause a difference. Within the household, it

was recorded that the amount of verbal aggression decreased during the lockdowns. Parenting styles were not adjusted or changed negatively according to the article's research.

Hypotheses

H1(t-Test): There will be a statistically significant difference between individuals who were enrolled in school at the time of the pandemic and those who were not and their increased levels of stress and anxiety. H2(ANOVA): There will be a statistical significant difference between males and females and how well they feel they adapted or how often they struggled to adapt to online learning during the pandemic. H3(Correlation): There will be a statistical significant relationship between how often individuals watch COVID-19 pandemic news and their increased levels of stress and anxiety. H4(Chi-Square): There will be a significant statistical difference between those who were employed and those who were not during the pandemic and whether they experienced mental health changes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

To gather information, the researcher conducted a survey through google forms to reach students and adults (18+). This survey consisted of nine questions, some yes or no and others on a scale ranging through "often-never". In order to successfully complete this study, the researcher gathered 100+ survey responses and developed tests and results. The survey was available to the public for approximately five days. One short answer question was in the researchers survey asking "What factors or practices benefited you and/or your family during the COVID-19 pandemic?" The responses were very similar in the way that each individual described mandates from the CDC. Some examples of the responses were, mask wearing, vaccinations, social distancing, good hygiene practices, etc. Others responses were, staying active, getting outside, spending time with family, getting to work full-time, reading, etc. What

the researcher was aiming for in responses were leaning more towards mental health benefits. What exactly brought stress levels down in individuals during a chaotic time period. The question should have been adjusted so that the receiver understood what the question was asking. After all responses were gathered, they were imported into an excel sheet and further analyzed in SPSS to determine the differences and relationships. Once all responses were recorded, the researcher then created hypotheses for each test and narrowed down what studies would be most interesting from the surveyed groups. Survey responders were less likely to answer the short answer question throughout the time my survey was available and since the question was interpreted incorrectly in majority of the responses, the researcher decided it was best to throw the short answer question out of the final results.

Results

t-Test:

There is no statistical significant difference between individuals who were enrolled in school during the pandemic and their levels of stress and anxiety increasing during COVID-19. The t value of the t-Test was .317 which is greater than .05, meaning that there are no effects of watching more pandemic news leading to an increase in stress and anxiety in individuals

ANOVA:

There was no statistical significant difference between males and females and how well or how much they struggled when adapting to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The F value resulted in .669 which is greater than .05 meaning that there was no difference between how well males adapted to online learning compared to females.

Correlation:

There is no statistical significant relationship between the amount of COVID-19 news exposed to individuals and their levels of stress and anxiety increasing. There was a weak relationship between the amount of COVID-19 news exposed to individuals and their levels of stress and anxiety. The P value was .372 which shows a low relationship strength between these two variables.

Chi-Square:

There was a statistical significant difference between individuals that were employed and individuals that were not employed during the pandemic and if they noticed negative changes in their mental health. The P value was .270 which is less than 5 meaning that being employed did affect individuals mental health changes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion

According to all my previous research and the scholarly article I found at the beginning, I thought my hypotheses would be correct. After getting the results of all my statistics, I am surprised at the results from most of the tests. The test results that surprised me the most were the t-Test results. For the t-test we analyzed individuals that were enrolled in school or not enrolled, and how that affected their levels of stress and anxiety increasing. I expected the individuals who happened to be enrolled in classes would experience higher levels of stress and anxiety as opposed to those who were not enrolled in school. After reviewing articles and other people's research it seemed that the two concepts would have an effect on one another but they did not with my survey results. Gender did not seem to have an effect on how well students adapted to remote learning at the high school level or at universities after running an ANOVA. I expected females to be able to adapt quicker and easier to remote learning than males. I hypothesized there would be a strong relationship between the amount of COVID news people were exposed to and

their levels of stress and anxiety increasing but the two do not affect each other according to the correlation results. I expected the more pandemic news an individual was exposed to, the higher their levels of stress and anxiety would be. I was satisfied with the results of the Chi-Square. The results of this test did show that there was a statistical significant difference between individuals who were employed during the pandemic and those who were not and whether they noticed negative changes in their mental health. These results show us that those who were employed during the COVID-19 pandemic noticed and experienced a negative shift in their mental health during this time.

Limitations

Studying the mental health effects of COVID-19 and comparing them to pre-pandemic, to during, and post-pandemic, the researcher wanted to originally find what certain factors benefited the individual's mental health. In the survey, the answers received to that question were not what the researcher was looking for. The misconception of the question was primarily the researchers' fault, now looking back at the lack of specificity. This limited a piece of the study that the researcher initially intended to discuss further in the paper. Another limitation known from the beginning of the research was the deadline. The survey ended with one hundred and six responses and then needed to be closed in order to fully complete the study by a certain date. The survey was limited to individuals eighteen years of age or older and was only reached to people in the surrounding area.

Areas of Future Research

Areas of future research include studies focused more towards mental health after the pandemic died down rather than studying mental health during the pandemic specifically. Medical students were initially part of the study but no research was found on how it affected

their studying habits or challenged them mentally and physically. Gathering research from medical students and their adaptation to remote learning. Future studies diving deeper into the gender differences on mental health affects during COVID-19. Looking closer into why men and women viewed the time of the pandemic so differently. An area that was not studied as much in this research were the positives that came from the pandemic rather than the mental health distress it implemented. The last area of future research would be looking into individuals that live in bigger cities where more drastic changes were put into place during the time of the pandemic.

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Survey:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1vruM-FuG1sd-XfJhkAOMoibmrGZ8zPgL0i-7UsZFEa8/edit>

