

The Impact of Loneliness and Social Support on Resiliency and Depressive Symptoms During the Pandemic

by

Chakalyn Patterson, Derrick Adams, Erica East, Hannah Williams, Kelsie Hagan, Megan Wilson, Mohammad Abdulzahra, Sierra Norwood, Trinity Mosher

Introduction

As cases of COVID-19 have risen, so has the amount of time that students at universities have had to spend alone, isolated from both their classmates as well as their professors, advisors, coaches, and mentors. The impact that isolation, as well as the collapse of social support systems, has had on the resilience and depressive symptomatology of college students is the focus of this study. Scientists are rapidly exploring the impacts of the pandemic, but college students have received less research attention regarding COVID-19. Despite being one of the least medically vulnerable to the coronavirus, this group has been arguably the most psychosocially impacted by the pandemic. The findings from this study will be crucial to gaining a more in-depth understanding of how college students have been affected by the pandemic long term.

Hypothesis

We expect the results of this study will show that increased levels of loneliness and isolation, coupled with low levels of social support, will be related to higher levels of depressive symptoms among college students.

Methods

- This study was run in large groups, in a classroom setting with college students taking psychology and sociology classes at Methodist University.
- Consent forms were given to students who wished to participate in the study.
- Researchers then proceeded to administer three surveys (UCLA Loneliness Scale, Social Support Battery, and the Center for Epidemiologic Depression Scale) in a randomized order.
- Following the completion of the experiment, researchers gave participants flyers containing information concerning the Center for Personal Development.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to look at the relationship between loneliness, social support, and depression among college students during the later stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is relevant because scientists are rapidly exploring the impacts of COVID -19 and more research on long-term psychosocial impacts will be very useful.

Data Results

Both correlational and regression analyses will be performed to assess the relationship between loneliness, depressive symptomatology, and the scales for overall, in-person, and online social support. Of particular interest is whether the categories of in-person social support (Social, Emotional, Informational, Instrumental) have a differential impact on loneliness and depressive symptomatology. The implications of findings for future research will be discussed once data compilation and assessment is completed.

Discussion

The implications of findings for future research will be discussed once data compilation and assessment is completed.

Resources

- Luchetti, M., Lee, J. H., Aschwanden, D., Sesker, A., Strickhouser, J. E., Terracciano, A., & Sutin, A. R. (2020). The trajectory of loneliness in response to COVID-19. *American Psychologist*, 75(7), 897–908. <https://doi.apa.org/fulltext/2020-42807-001.html>
- Additional references available upon request.

Advisor

Dr. Katharine Snyder