

COPING DURING COVID: A PILOT STUDY ON SOCIAL SUPPORT, MENTAL HEALTH AND THE INTERNET

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As we begin thinking about how society can **cope with** and eventually **recover from the pandemic**, this research highlights the **immense potential that our social relationships have** as a resource.

"[The pandemic] really shines light on the importance of having people around you that you care about and vice versa. We are all meant to be social." -Participant 9



Background

It is no secret that **the pandemic has been a devastating time** for society.

There was a **need to take an in-depth look** at how people are doing: what's been challenging, and what's been helpful during this time.

This **exploratory study** focused on people's experiences with social support and mental health during the pandemic.

It also looked at how these experiences changed during different points of the pandemic (**strict vs. lenient social distancing measures**).

Finally, the study touched briefly on how helpful having **access to the internet** has been at this time.

Research Questions



1. Is there a **relationship** between social support and mental health?
2. Do people feel that COVID-19 is affecting their **access to social support**?
3. Do people feel that COVID-19 is affecting their **mental health**?
4. Do people feel that **the internet has been helpful** with regards to managing social support and mental health during COVID?
5. Do people feel that their experiences with social support and mental health **changed throughout the progression of the pandemic**?

Methods



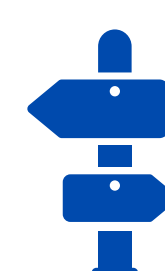
21 young adults (mean age= 21.62 years) were recruited to complete an **online survey** which included a combination of close-ended (**quantitative**) and open-ended (**qualitative**) questions. The following tools were used:

1. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MPSS),
2. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)
3. A series of independently designed nominal (Yes/No) and open-ended questions.



Key Findings

1. Social support and mental health were **positively related**.
2. People reported a **deterioration in their social relationships** at this time.
3. People reported a **deterioration of their mental health** at this time.
4. The **internet has been extremely helpful** as a means to stay **connected to others**.
5. Although **access to social support had improved** during times with more lenient social distancing measures, **mental health consistently deteriorated** regardless of whether social distancing measures were more lenient.



Future Research Directions

1. **Maximizing on the internet** as a resource for recovery. We're already using it, and it has great potential benefits if used in a healthy way.
2. Understanding **friendships** as a source of social support.
3. **Personal Space** and Mental Health. Looking at the importance of privacy and the difference between privacy and isolation.
4. Improving and promoting **Mental Health Services**.
5. Quarantining and **self-image/esteem**.
6. The pandemic and **adjacent physical health outcomes**.