INTRODUCTION

Cognitive Predictors of Student Success: COVID-19 College Students’ Family Relationships and Mental and Physical Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This study examined the following hypotheses:

1. Higher levels of family conflict will be associated with higher levels of both depressive symptoms and sleep disruptions.
2. Higher levels of depressive symptoms will be related to greater sleep disruption.
3. Higher levels of individualization will be associated with a greater incidence of family conflict.
4. Higher levels of impact and exposure to COVID-19 will be associated with higher levels of sleep disruption, depressive symptoms, and family conflict.

METHODS

Participants:
- 113 College students from Marquette University
  - Ages 18 to 23 years, M = 20.3, SD = 1.1
  - 85% Female, 15% Male
  - 63.7% White; 9.7% Asian / Asian American; 7.1% Black / African American; 6.2% Latino/a/x; 1.8% Middle Eastern; 11.5% Multi-racial

Measures:
- The Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (Buysse et al., 1989)
  - 19-item, self-rated questionnaire assessing sleep quality, sleep disturbance, sleep medication use, and daytime dysfunction
- The COVID-19 Exposure and Family Impact Scale (Kazak et al., 2021)
  - 28 items assessing COVID-related exposures and 17 items assessing impacts of COVID-19
- The Young Adults’ and Parents’ Report of Family Conflict and the Young Adults’ Reports of Parent Intrusiveness measure (Stormshak et al., 2017)
  - 11-item questionnaire assessing young adult perceptions of family conflict and parent intrusiveness
- The Patient Health Questionnaire - 9 (Kroenke et al., 2001)
  - 9 items self-reporting on the DSM-IV criteria for depressive disorder diagnosis
- The Latent Adolescent Individuation Questionnaire (Balk, 1997)
  - 13 items assessing participant levels of connection and separateness from their parents

RESULTS

Table 1: Percentage of Students in Each Living Situation Before and During COVID-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Prior to COVID</th>
<th>Early Months of COVID</th>
<th>Summer Months of COVID</th>
<th>Fall 2020 Semester</th>
<th>Winter Months of COVID</th>
<th>Spring 2020 Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On Campus Housing</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>36.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Off Campus Housing (Not With Family)</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Family Residence</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>15.2</td>
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</tbody>
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Family conflict was not significantly associated with depression, $r = .00$, ns, but higher family conflict was associated with greater college student sleep disturbance, $r = .22$, $p = .03$.

- Student reports of more depressive symptoms were associated with poorer sleep quality, $r = .40$, $p < .001$; more sleep disturbance, $r = .34$, $p < .001$; more sleep medication use, $r = .29$, $p < .01$; and greater daytime dysfunction, $r = .67$, $p < .001$.
- Greater reports of family conflict were associated with lower levels of feeling connected with parents, $r = -.30$, $p < .01$, and higher levels of parental control, $r = .67$, $p < .001$.
- Greater exposure to COVID-related events and impacts were associated with more symptoms of depression, $r = .27$, $p < .01$, and $r = .48$, $p < .01$, and greater daytime dysfunction, $r = .26$, $p < .01$, and $r = .37$, $p < .001$. More COVID-related exposures, but not impacts, were associated with greater family conflict, $r = .25$, $p = .01$, and more sleep medication use, $r = .21$, $p = .02$. More COVID-related impacts, but not exposures, were associated with more sleep disturbances, $r = .24$, $p = .01$, and poorer overall sleep quality, $r = .21$, $p = .03$.

ADDITIONAL RESULTS

- 39.9% of participants had clinically significant levels of depression
- Student Commentary on COVID-19
  - “I feel more anxious, and depressed since not being able to see my friends on a daily basis.”
  - “A loss of focus, especially with school. Also, there were deaths in the family that were not COVID-related, but we could not be there to attend the funeral, care for direct loved ones of those who passed away. Also, I have friends that have huge deterioration of mental health, but because we were all home it was hard to help each other in person. A lot of anxiety and depression on missed opportunities, events, and uncertainty of future.”
  - “I think my family was brought closer together to share quality time due to the COVID-19 pandemic.”
  - “It brought my family closer together, but it also made us argue a lot being in close quarters for months.”
  - “It created this social isolation from others we loved and increased over anxiety and negative mood. We no longer do the things that used to be normal to us like going out.”

DISCUSSION

- Students’ experiences during the pandemic were associated with family interaction difficulties.
- Students struggled significantly with depression and sleep over the pandemic, which may have impacted their academic success and personal lives.
- Universities should continue to offer resources and programs for their students as they cope with the pandemic since it has had such a profound impact on their levels of depression, sleep disruptions, and family conflict.

REFERENCES


