The Psychological Impact of COVID-19 and Social Distancing

Preliminary Findings
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Introduction

➤ During the March-August 2020 period, the COVID-19 pandemic forced students across the country to shelter in place

➤ Browning et al. (2021): assessed students from seven US universities and found high psychological impact due to sheltering in place: higher stress, higher worry, more negative emotion states, and preoccupation with COVID-19
  ○ Specifically significant for students who identified as female, people of color, and low income

➤ In fall of 2020, we administered a virtual MTurk survey to first-year Bucknell students to examine how variables in the students' home quarantine environment predicted key outcome variables of students' loneliness and anxiety levels
  ○ These results today are part of a larger study including other variables not discussed today

Method

➢ This survey was distributed to 118 PSYC100 first-year Bucknell students through the Intro Psych Research SONA System

➢ This survey was administered across a one month period from October to November of 2020
  ○ Demographics
    ■ 71.2% female
    ■ 88% Caucasian/White
    ■ Mean Age: 18.69
    ■ Almost all quarantined in parents' home

➢ On Qualtrics survey, participants were asked to base their responses **on their feelings in their quarantine environment from March-August 2020**.

Measures

Predictor variables
- Students reported on the **number of people** in student's quarantine environment
- Students rated their **level of psychological/emotional safety** in their quarantine environment (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*)

➢ The **Trust** Subscale of the IPPA: The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greensburg, 1987)
- Students rated level of trust with their **father and mother separately**
- Sample item: "My father/mother doesn't understand what I'm going through these days."

Key Outcome Variables
➢ UCLA 3-Item **Loneliness** Scale (Russell et al., 1980)
- Sample item: "How often do you feel that you lack companionship?"
➢ GAD-7: Generalized **Anxiety** Disorder Scale (Spitzer et al., 2006).
- Sample item: "How often did you feel anxious, nervous, or on edge?"

➢ Cronbach's Alpha Values
- IPPA - Father (Trust): .92
- IPPA - Mother (Trust): .88
- Loneliness: .85
- Anxiety: .96

Results

Table 1: Descriptives

	Mean	Maximum Possible Score	Standard Deviation	Mode
Anxiety	2.12	4.00	0.96	1.00
Loneliness	1.88	3.00	0.66	2.00
Psychological Safety	5.69	7.00	1.609	7.00
Father Trust	4.21	5.00	0.89	5.00
Mother Trust	4.50	5.00	0.59	5.00

Results

➢ **T-Tests** were conducted to identify differences between male and female students.

➢ Only one significant difference was found:
  ○ **Psychological safety** of male participants (*M = 5.95, SD = 1.44*) significantly higher than the female participants (*M = 5.06, SD = 1.84*)
  ○ *t(116) = 2.81, p < 0.01*
  ○ On average, males felt psychologically safer in their quarantine environment than females did, but both group means indicated they felt generally safe

Results

Table 2: Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Anxiety	-	.61**	-.33**	-.22**	-.01
2. Loneliness		-	-.42**	-.32**	-.31**
3. Psychological safety			-	.21*	.17
4. Father Trust				-	.36**
5. Mother Trust					-

* P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01

Results

➤ **Regressions** were conducted to predict anxiety and loneliness

- ○ How did psychological safety, number of people in quarantine environment, and trust in mother and father predict **anxiety**?
    - ■ Collectively, these variables predicted significant variance, $R^2 = 0.15$, $p < 0.001$
- ○ **Psychological safety** was a *significant individual predictor* of anxiety
    - ■ $\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.001$
- ○ **Trust in father** was a *significant individual predictor* of anxiety
    - ■ $\beta = -0.20$, $p < 0.04$
- ○ Number of people in quarantine environment and trust in mother *were not* significant predictors of anxiety

Results

- How did psychological safety, number of people in quarantine environment, and trust in mother and father predict **loneliness?**
    - Collectively, these variables predicted significant variance, R^2 = .27, p < 0.001
- **Psychological safety** alone was a *significant individual predictor* of loneliness
    - β = -.35, p = 0.000
- Both **trust in mother and father** were *individual significant predictors of loneliness*
    - β = -.18, p < 0.05

Conclusion

➢ Our results are only **preliminary**, but our main findings included:

  ○ In general, Bucknell first-year students were low in anxiety and loneliness during their COVID quarantine homestay
  ○ Number of people in students' quarantine environment did ***not*** impact loneliness, anxiety, or trust in father/mother
  ○ Students' psychological safety was inversely related to their anxiety and loneliness, and was correlated with higher trust in both father and mother
  ○ Higher psychological safety and higher trust in father predicted lower levels of anxiety
  ○ Higher trust in both mother and father predicted lower levels of loneliness

Conclusion

➢ We surveyed students during their first semester reporting on their quarantine period in their senior year in high school
  ○ Anxiety reports may have been due to their already living at home

➢ We believe that the demographic of our sample being overwhelmingly white and the majority living with their parents had an impact on our findings
  ○ Other studies show higher psychological impacts in marginalized individuals, such as people of color

➢ We are going to continue analyses on other predictors and outcome variables
  ○ Ethnicity, body image and disordered eating

WORKS CITED

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