

Effects of Reduced Social Contact on Mental Health of MHPNHS-HumSS Students

Marjhie Dionisio, Gwen Andrea F. Asuncion, Rose Charlotte N. Acuña, Jelena Monic C. Tabuzo, Christopher DC. Francisco

Marcelo H. Del Pilar National Highschool, Bagong Bayan, City of Malolos, Bulacan, Philippines
christopher.francisco004@deped.gov.ph

Abstract: *The primary objective of this study is to determine the effects of reduced social interaction during COVID-19 on the mental health of Humanities and Social Sciences students. To accomplish this goal, the researcher employed the descriptive correlational approach using a questionnaire as the major data collection tool. It is a researcher-created questionnaire designed to examine whether or not the reduced social interaction had an effect on the mental health condition of the HUMSS students and how they were connected to one another. The finding indicates that reducing social interaction has a significant impact on students' mental health, as evidenced by 0.0509 correlation coefficients. Despite the fact that it appeared to be a weak positive correlation, it clearly demonstrates that both variables were responding to each other by continuing to increase. This demonstrates that many students still appear to believe the pandemics strictly enforced limitations, particularly the prohibition on social engagement, had an impact on their mental health.*

Keywords – Effects of Reduced Social Contact, Students' Mental Health, Descriptive-correlational Study

1. INTRODUCTION

As COVID-19 spreads, physical precautions are required to contain the virus, resulting in fewer possibilities for face-to-face social interaction outside the family [1]. It is the most visible public health response, and it is crucial for breaking the cycle of infection. Among the measures in order to maintain social distance when out in public, are school closures, limits on meetings and corporate events, and directives to stay at home [2]. With this given, the whole nation was affected, particularly in the sectors of education, public health, and transportation.

The closing of schools and the implementation of new normal distance learning has been concerning since it has resulted in a reduction in social interactions, personal losses, and the experience of general risks to students' well-being. Furthermore, social isolation is one of the primary countermeasures to the epidemic, but this strategy can generate stress and influence the population's academic development and mental health [3]. Although these activities are vital to limit the spread of coronavirus, they may have a negative impact on mental health.

Reduced social interaction has had several consequences and changes on students' mental health. They were used to physically performing academic duties. With the introduction of the new learning environment, the social contact of Humanities and Social Sciences students at Marcelo H. Del Pilar National High School with one has decreased. Students' mental health has been a significant concern. The COVID-19 epidemic has refocused attention on this vulnerable demographic [4]. According to the findings of the research, this abrupt transition has numerous negative consequences on students' mental health, including melancholy, anxiety, stress, loneliness, frustration, uncertainty, and many other symptoms [5]. Because there is no specialized research on our issue, the highlights of this

study will be on the effects of staying at home for an extended amount of time on the mental health of every MHPNHS – HumSS student.

The point of the study is to see whether the effect limited social contact has on MHPNHS – HumSS students during COVID-19. We examine the present state of their mental health and how stress, anxiety, loneliness, and depressive symptoms have worsened in comparison to pre-crisis levels [6]. Social isolation's effect on health risk may be mediated by a mix of direct biological mechanisms and lifestyle variables [7]. Furthermore, it specifies the field of research among Del Pilarian pupils, allowing us to get a result inside our specific region.

The study will not only assist students in receiving recognition for their difficulties, but it will also create awareness among authorities about the ongoing hardships of a young students in the current scenario. The present crisis is already concerning, as the government is concentrated on the economic harm caused by the epidemic while ignoring the mental welfare of the residents. The epidemic not only affected the general public's social life but also their mental health, which was harmed as a result of their reduced social life with one another. The study's goal is to provide a solution to the existing crisis as well as assistance to those who demand it. Future researchers will profit from this study as well since they will be able to continue what this study initiated. The outcome of this study, as well as the change of perception of higher education, might have a significant impact on society's future.

2. RELATED WORKS

The psychological impact of quarantine in relation to COVID-19 infection has also been recorded, as have the most relevant psychological reactions in the general community in

relation to the COVID-19 epidemic [8]. In older individuals, social isolation is associated with decreased objective physical activity and greater sedentary behavior. The significance of risk and protective variables in the development of mental diseases in susceptible persons has also been studied [9].

The results show that higher degrees of social connectivity during the lockdown period were related to reduced levels of felt stress, as well as general and COVID-19-specific concerns. Furthermore, we discovered a negative connection between tiredness and social connectivity that was mediated by stress, general concerns, and COVID-19-specific concerns [10].

The examined data demonstrate how physical distance may have a disproportionate influence on an age group for which peer contact is an important part of development [11]. The critical role that social relationships play in fostering resilience by buffering against unfavorable physical and mental health consequences, especially under adversity [12]. It demonstrates that there are negative mental health correlations of social distance, particularly among students, which should be addressed in COVID-19 research, policy, and therapeutic methods [13].

Loneliness is a worry for the elderly, and actions to increase social contact are required to relieve it. The nature of treatments aimed at influencing distinct, subjective perceptions of loneliness/social connectivity has not been well addressed [14]. Loneliness among the elderly rose throughout the epidemic, although their mental health remained rather steady. Physical separation policies did not result in considerable social isolation, but personal losses, fears about the pandemic, and a lack of faith in social institutions were associated with increased mental health problems, particularly emotional loneliness [15].

Generalized fear and widespread community anxiety are common psychological reactions to the COVID-19 mass quarantine, which are typically associated with disease outbreaks and have increased with the escalation of new cases combined with insufficient, anxiety-inducing information provided by the media. People from marginalized groups, such as the elderly or those suffering from mental diseases, should be allowed to actively engage with clinical psychotherapists in order to detect warning signs early. The psychological impact of pandemic-induced dread and anxiety must be officially identified as a public health priority by both authorities and politicians, who must immediately establish clear behavioral measures to lower the disease burden and the terrible mental health consequences of this epidemic [16].

According to the findings, social relationships are critical for our health and well-being. This is especially true during periods of great uncertainty and anguish, such as the COVID-19 lockdown. It emphasizes the critical role that social relationships play in fostering resilience by buffering against unfavorable physical and mental health consequences, particularly under adversity. Furthermore, the study discovered a negative association between tiredness and

social connectivity that was mediated by stress, general concerns, and COVID-19-specific reasons. [17].

In a study conducted, there is a clear display of worry, fear of failure, lack of drive, and loneliness. The significance of face-to-face connection and the use of digital platforms has been highlighted [18]. The duration of loneliness was shown to be more significantly associated with mental health symptoms than the degree of loneliness [19].

Nobody predicted that a lack of social connection, lockdown, or quarantine would result in a "second pandemic" with major mental health issues. In this current COVID-19 pandemic, the research will attempt to discover and present an overview of risk factors that might induce psychological impacts, as well as alternative strategies to prevent them. Students appear to be more susceptible to mental health disorders than the overall population [20].

Students' mental health difficulties appear to be greatly impacted when situations of social restriction emerge, necessitating attention and assistance [21]. The hazards of essential public health responses, as well as the allocation of resources for interventions while people are under lockdown, should be mandatory components of emergency preparedness [22].

Because of the long-term pandemic scenario and onerous measures such as lockdown and stay-at-home orders, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on higher education [23]. It emphasizes the crucial need of interventions and preventative activities to address the mental health of MHPNHS – HumSS students. Participants sought assistance from others and helped themselves by employing either negative or positive coping strategies to deal with stress and anxiety [24].

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main problem of this study was to determine the effects of reduced social contact on the mental health of MHPNHS-HumSS Students. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How may reduced social contact be described?
2. What is the level of mental health of MHPNHS-HumSS Students?
3. Does reduced social contact significantly affect the mental health of MHPNHS-HumSS Students?
4. What implications may be derived from the findings of the study?

4. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive correlational research approach was used by the researchers. A correlational study is a form of research technique in which two variables are observed in order to demonstrate a statistically significant link between them. Specifically, this study aimed to determine the effects of reduced social contact on the mental health of HumSS students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Using the Raosoft Software, a sample size calculator, the respondents of the study consisted of 244 out of 663 HUMSS

students for the school year 2021-2022. The researchers selected a sample from the population using a random sampling approach or a fishbowl technique.

To gather the necessary data for this study, the researchers adopted a standardized questionnaire entitled "Psychometric characteristics of the Positive Mental Health Scale (PMH scale)," which was developed and validated by Becker, Lukat, Lutz, Margraf, and Vander Veld (2016) to characterize mental health improvements. This questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale type and is highly reliable, as indicated by a Cronbach alpha of .93. Meanwhile, the researchers also used a 15-item self-made questionnaire to describe the decrease in social interaction among COVID-19 respondents. This questionnaire has a 5-point Likert scale type and will be subjected to expert validation.

The researchers used the following procedures to collect data: With the careful permission of the Marcelo H. del Pilar National Research Coordinator after implementing all the comments, suggestions, and suggestions given during the proposal defense, a letter was submitted to the school administration requesting permission to perform the study. With their permission, the researchers created a Google Forms link showing the consent form on the initial portion of the survey and disseminate it to the respondents with the assistance of the researchers' contact persons per strand/section.

The data were tabulated and treated using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). The following statistical measures were utilized to examine and interpret the collected data: mean procedures, frequency counts, and person r correlation coefficient/regression analysis.

This study ensured that the ethical criteria established by the general research ethics are fulfilled in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Participants were notified about all the measures that is done in this research as a result of this. Respondents are more essential than the research and, as a result, are always respected. They were informed that the study is entirely voluntary and do not negatively affect their lives as students or individuals, or even their families. As a result, secrecy was ensured because no one sought the respondents' personal information. Finally, the data gathering material was stored and destroyed.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reduced Social Contact

Table 1. Reduced Social Contact

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Reduced social contact during the pandemic changed my behavior towards life situations.	4.16	To a great extent

2. Reduced social contact during the pandemic affected my physical health/immunity.	3.89	To a great extent
3. Reduced social contact during the pandemic triggered my anxiety to create dramatic effects in life.	3.92	To a great extent
4. Reduced social contact during the pandemic caused me emotional stress.	3.9	To a great extent
5. Reduced social contact during the pandemic lessened my spiritual faith.	2.98	To some extent
6. I follow the government's guidelines for community-based epidemic response.	4.24	To a great extent
7. I prevent or postpone trips abroad.	3.81	To a great extent
8. I rarely attend family gatherings.	3.54	To a great extent
9. My sleep quality became poor.	4.27	To a great extent
10. I became sensitive toward other people's actions.	3.92	To a great extent
11. I had a hard time combating loneliness.	4	To a great extent
12. Unhealthy habits within myself were triggered such as lacking encouragement.	4.05	To a great extent
13. I check the capacity of a place before meeting up with friends.	3.94	To a great extent
14. I struggled to adapt to the new normal outside.	3.67	To a great extent
15. Reduced social contact developed my inner cognitive deterioration.	3.67	To a great extent
Average	3.86	To a great extent

Reduced Social Contact. As evidenced by the average score of 3.86 in Table 1 can be considered satisfactory. However, Table 1 indicated that the effects of limited social contact on HUMSS students during COVID-19 have negatively affected the students. This was evident in the following behaviors when asked about their experiences with behavioral change (4.16), physical immunity (3.89), triggered anxiety (3.92), emotional stress (3.9), decreased spiritual health (2.98), following community guidelines (4.24), postponed trips (3.81), barely attending gatherings (3.54), sleep deprivation (4.27), social sensitivity (3.92), overcoming loneliness (4), unhealthful habits (4.05), observing places with safety measures (3.94), struggle to adapt to new normal (3.67).

The highest score was noted on adjusting practices with reduced social contact that obtain poor quality sleep. It

revealed some peculiarities that developed the sleep quality of the students worse. Despite the fact that it obtained the highest mean of 4.27, it just clearly shows that reduced social contact resulted in a negative effect on the students' state of quality sleep. The study also obtained the lowest mean of 2.98, indicating outcomes for stability in the case of spiritual faith. They are, however, forced to determine whether one is the cause and to continue to develop a plan to tackle the pandemic's components. This occurs because students are exposed to a variety of scenarios and can form their own opinions as a result. Nonetheless, each person has their own experience and solution, which they would adopt.

HUMSS Students' Mental Health

Table 2. HUMSS Students' Mental Health

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. I am often carefree and in good spirits	3.41	To some extent
2. I enjoy my life.	3.37	To some extent
3. All in all, I am satisfied with my life.	3.1	To some extent
4. In general, I am confident.	2.97	To some extent
5. I manage well to fulfill my needs.	3.08	To some extent
6. I am in good physical and emotional condition.	2.73	To some extent
7. I feel that I am well equipped to deal with life and its difficulties.	3.13	To some extent
8. Much of what I do brings me joy.	3.37	To some extent
9. I am a calm, balanced human being.	3.1	To some extent
Average	3.14	To some extent

HUMSS Students' Mental Health. According to Table 2, the mental health of HUMSS students during COVID – 19 pertained "To some extent," as evidenced by the average score of 3.14. Statement 1 received the greatest mean score of 3.41 and the corresponding interpretation of "To some extent," while Statement 6 received the lowest mean score of 2.73 and similarly translates to "To some extent."

The result revealed that despite the fact that the statements for Table 2 were all positive, some portion of the students' responses agreed with the statements and some remaining portions disagreed with them. It declares that the outcome of the statements for the students is in a neutral condition; for some of them gave positive responses that agree, technically, in conjunction with the disapproval of others.

Effects of Reducing Contact during COVID-19 on Mental Health of HumSS Students

The findings demonstrate that reducing social interaction has a considerable impact on students' mental health, as

evidenced by 0.0509 correlation coefficients. Despite the fact that it appeared to be a weak positive correlation, it however implies that both variables were engaged in getting higher in reaction to one another. This means that a large number of students believed that the pandemic's strict regulations, notably the restriction of social interaction, had an impact on their mental health.

Implications Based on the Findings of the Study

During the pandemic, strict regulations were enforced, and sectors including as education were affected. Learners and educators must cope as much as possible in order to continue the learning process. Aside from that, they should be mentally prepared for this adjustment. Some students have simply acclimated to this adjustment, while others have taken their time and some have quit because of it.

The outcome indicate that it might be a stepping stone toward focusing on students' mental health, particularly those who were affected by the restricted social interaction guideline. This acts as a wake-up call to recognize that reduced engagement might lead to a greater problem. The study has some values that are important in the inference and observe the emphasis of how the students see education mentally.

The study was found to appropriately address the subject. They would feel affirmed and see the difference when restricted limitations, such as restricting social engagement, were implemented. Aside from raising awareness, it may also result in a solution provided by the educational sector. It would be valuable to future researchers who would explore a similar subject while making progress.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers drew the following conclusions: first, The reduced social contact of the students' were described as "to a great extent" ; second, the status of the mental health of students showed an "excellent" result; third, this shows that many students believed that the strict regulations of the pandemic specifically the reduced social contact, has impacted their mental health; fourth, reduced social contact on students mental health indicates considerable value for students to recognize that it could lead to a bigger problem.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and conclusion, the researchers offer the following scope for the future: (1) The researchers would like the Department of Education to use this study to take into consideration the factors that affect the students with regards to improving the guidelines for new normal set up during the COVID-19 outbreak, (2) authorities under the educational sectors should propose counselling programs in schools to improve awareness about students' mental health and (3) be a substantial foundation for building both the disadvantages and benefits as a result of the sudden changes that the new normal conditions have brought, it is unquestionably a

stepping stone for mental health to be prioritized in order for it to be stabilize.

The population sample is the first limitation of the study. Following that, other students from surrounding strands and grade levels should be included among the respondents to make the result more reliable. The researchers also suggest using a recently approved questionnaire to fit the setting of the title of the study, the reduced social contact on mental health of students during COVID-19. A more complex statistical procedure, such as confirmatory factor analysis or structural equation modeling, is also recommended.

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