

Exploring the Experiences of People Vlogging about Their Mental Health During the COVID-19 Lockdown: A Thematic Analysis

Panoraia Andriopoulou* and Natalina Paola Samanta Servina

Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester UK

Abstract: Background: The mental health consequences of the COVID-19 lockdown are of great concern. The true extent of these difficulties is not yet known, as there is only a limited number of preliminary survey-based studies.

Aims: The present study aimed to explore how individuals experienced mental health difficulties during the lockdown, as they vlogged about them on YouTube.

Methods: YouTube was searched systematically using relevant keywords ("Lockdown", "Mental health", "Depression" and "Anxiety") and a set of 42 vlog videos was identified as eligible for analysis. Videos were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: Five overarching themes were identified: instability and extreme states; sense of loss; intolerance of ambiguity; barriers to improvement; and helpful practices.

Conclusions: These themes demonstrated that individuals are essentially prone to the experience of mental health issues during the lockdown. The implications of the findings are discussed, particularly in relation to the need for pandemic-tailored psychosocial interventions.

Keywords: Mental health, COVID-19 lockdown, Depression, Anxiety, YouTube.

INTRODUCTION

The recent outbreak of COVID-19 has advanced into a global pandemic affecting countries across all continents (World Health Organization, 2020). In response to this outbreak, several countries have enforced a general lockdown that mandates the avoidance of close physical contact through the shutting of schools, businesses, restaurants, borders and the need to remain at home as much as possible. With these ramifications, one of the major concerns has been the potential impact these consequences may have on mental health (Caqueo-Urizar *et al.*, 2020; Lennon, 2020; Lopes & Jaspal, 2020). These concerns have been amplified in the light of rapid preliminary findings pointing to elevated levels of common mental health issues in association with the COVID-19 outbreak (Ahmed *et al.*, 2020; Iqbal & Dar, 2020; Fitzpatrick, Harris & Drawve, 2020). Given that this outbreak is a recent phenomenon, no studies to date, to the best of our knowledge, have provided a rich account of the mental health experiences of individuals during the lockdown. For this reason, the present study's aim was to account for this research need, by rigorously analysing YouTube videos where individuals share their experience of mental health difficulties during the lockdown.

A decline in mental health as a response to similar pandemic and national crises has been well-documented (Bonnano *et al.*, 2008; Chang *et al.*, 2013). For instance, a major peak in suicidal deaths was recorded in association with the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003 (Chan *et al.*, 2006). Conclusions from a qualitative enquiry based on these deaths suggested that stress, anxiety, social disengagement and negative perceptions about the self were identified as the main risk factors leading to suicide (Yip *et al.*, 2010). Considering the relative severity of COVID-19, it is plausible to predict that the mental health repercussions will be greater.

There is a small body of rapidly emerging research, including survey-based studies and commentary papers, which have provided preliminary findings on the detrimental effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on mental health. Accumulating evidence suggests that individuals have been experiencing elevated levels of symptoms of stress, paranoia, anxiety, depression and have been engaging in substance misuse (Iqbal & Dar, 2020; Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2020; Roy *et al.*, 2020). This trend has been recorded across several different countries (Abdullah, 2020; Ahmed *et al.*, 2020; Roy *et al.*, 2020; Sibley *et al.*, 2020). Aside from the general rise in mental health difficulties, there have been increased concerns for the wellbeing of individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions. Some authors hypothesized that the pandemic and its ramifications may provide a catalyst for the worsening of mental

*Address correspondence to this author at the Manchester Metropolitan University, Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX, UK; Tel: +441612472473; E-mail: n.andriopoulou@mmu.ac.uk

health issues (Chatterjee, Barikar & Mukherjee, 2020; Koushik, 2020; Lennon, 2020). In their qualitative study, Iqbal and Dar (2020) identified the underlying feelings of uncertainty, loneliness and helplessness as the driving forces behind the reported mental health problems. However, these could be mere speculations given that the authors failed to provide sufficient details of their study and methodology as evidence that appropriate and robust analytic procedures had been followed.

The majority of research efforts have been devoted to one dimension of this phenomenon falling short in encapsulating the full extent of the impact of the pandemic on mental health. As Holmes and colleagues (2020) recently argued, the understanding of the lived experiences of persons experiencing mental health difficulties during the pandemic is a research priority. To the best of our knowledge, only a small number of qualitative studies have sought to explore this topic. However, these studies were focused on front-line health care workers within their unique context (Kackin *et al.*, 2020; Munawar & Choudhry, 2020; Sun *et al.*, 2020). It is imperative for new research to understand the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on general population's mental health beyond numerical data. For this reason, the present study aimed to explore the experiences of individuals as they vlog on YouTube about their mental health difficulties during the lockdown. Exploring this through the voices of those affected will enable us to shed light on the experiences and processes that may form the background of the survey-based data that have emerged so far. The

overarching research question was: How did individuals experience mental health difficulties during the lockdown, as they vlogged about them using YouTube?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

The epistemological position within the present study is one of critical realism assuming that a reality with regards to mental health difficulties during the lockdown exists within the data (Bhaskar, 2008). In line with the research question, the chosen method was an inductive (data driven) thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The present study was based on data obtained from YouTube, a major public site that allows researchers' access to mass personal data (Wilkins & Thelwall, 2010).

Sample and Procedure

Following ethical approval, a systematic search was made on the 31st July 2020 in the YouTube search engine. This search was made for videos containing the combination of the following keywords (specified by Boolean operators): "lockdown", "AND", "mental health", "OR", "anxiety", "OR", "depression". Due to the substitution of pagination with infinite scrolling on YouTube video search results, scrolling was done to the point that no more results could be displayed. The resulting search initially yielded a total of 575 videos (see Figure 1). The search of videos was based on the

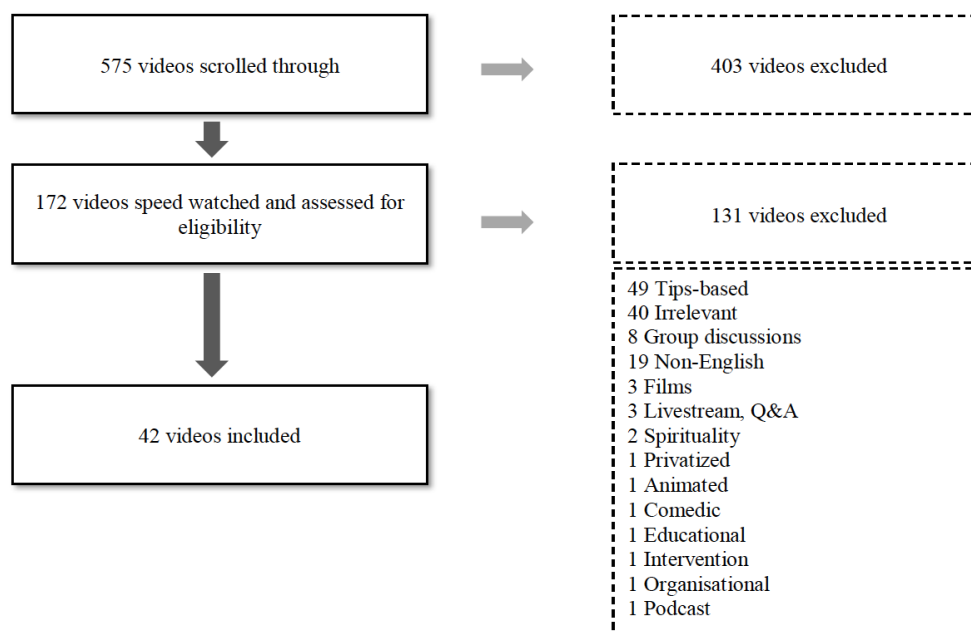


Figure 1: Systematic video search flowchart.

channel name, video descriptions or thumbnail characteristics. Table 2 describes in detail the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A total of 173 videos containing these words were included and speed watched for relevance. This process resulted in a further exclusion of 131 videos. One video had been privatized and the remaining 130 videos contained irrelevant content, entertainment content, tips, group discussions, spirituality or were in languages other than English. A final total set of 42 videos were identified as eligible for analysis. This process followed similar steps taken in previous research using YouTube videos (Naslund *et al.*, 2014; Sangeorzan, Andriopoulou & Livanou, 2019). The total duration of videos was 8 hours and 8 minutes with a mean length of 12.6 minutes. All videos were transcribed verbatim. Demographic information was collected from the transcripts, as shown in Table 1 below.

Ethical Considerations

Full ethical approval was gained from the Manchester Metropolitan University ethics committee, prior to the commencement of this study. The use of YouTube videos as secondary data is a topic that has been the subject of debate due to concerns related to consent, privacy and confidentiality of individuals involved (Jang, 2011). Based on ethical guidelines for internet-mediated research, it has been established that informed consent is not required when data forms part of the public domain (British Psychological Society, 2017). YouTube is a free platform that is readily accessible to all persons and is therefore a public domain. Steps were taken to enhance the anonymity and privacy of individuals, through the assignment of digits as video identifiers and the removal of names, video names, locations or any other identifiable information within the reporting of results.

Table 1: Vloggers' Demographic Information

Vlogger No	Living Alone/with Others	Pre-Existing Mental Health Conditions
Vlogger 1	Alone	Anxiety & depression
Vlogger 2	Alone	Generalized anxiety
Vlogger 3	Others	None
Vlogger 4	Others	Mild Anxiety
Vlogger 5	Unspecified	Unspecified
Vlogger 6	Others	Generalized anxiety
Vlogger 7	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 8	Unspecified	Anxiety & depression
Vlogger 9	Unspecified	Unspecified

Vlogger 10	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 11	Others	Anxiety, depression
Vlogger 12	Unspecified	Anxiety, depression, eating disorder
Vlogger 13	Others	Dissociative identity disorder
Vlogger 14	Others	None
Vlogger 15	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 16	Alone	Post-traumatic stress disorder
Vlogger 17	Unspecified	Unspecified
Vlogger 18	Unspecified	Unspecified
Vlogger 19	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 20	Unspecified	Depression
Vlogger 21	Unspecified	Bipolar affective disorder, Anxiety
Vlogger 22	Others	Depression
Vlogger 23	Others	Anxiety, depression
Vlogger 24	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 25	Alone	Social anxiety
Vlogger 26	Alone	Seasonal depression
Vlogger 27	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 28	Alone	Anxiety
Vlogger 29	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 30	Unspecified	Unspecified
Vlogger 31	Unspecified	Unspecified
Vlogger 32	Others	Anxiety
Vlogger 33	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 34	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 35	Unspecified	Unspecified
Vlogger 36	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 37	Alone	Problems with alcohol
Vlogger 38	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 39	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 40	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 41	Others	Unspecified
Vlogger 42	Others	Anorexia Nervosa

Note. Some vloggers disclosed their living circumstances and pre-existing mental health conditions. Others did not specify.

^a Only vloggers 3 and 14 confirmed absence of pre-existing mental health condition. ^b Vloggers 4, 5, 21, 23, 35 were observed as males.

Data Analysis

The analysis was guided by the six-step framework including the initial familiarisation with data, generation of initial codes, search for themes, review of themes, defining of themes and the write-up (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This occurred with a focus on the data at the semantic level with limited focus on latent meanings as

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Selection of YouTube Videos

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Contained keywords "lockdown" in combination with "mental health", "anxiety" and "depression"	Had thumbnails that indicated it was not a vlog (e.g. PowerPoint illustrations, virtual meetings, comedic images, music, fitness and entertainment animations)
Contained phrases in the title such as "My mental health during quarantine", "Anxiety in lockdown", "Mental health in lockdown"	Contained descriptions and words in the title that were not in English
Was a vlog, such that it appeared to be "a video sequence similar to a blog that a user (vlogger) shoots himself or herself speaking to a camera and after optimal editing uploads to the internet" (Frobenius, 2011: 816)	Contained groups of individuals expressing their views
Contained expressed views or opinions of a layperson	Contained views and opinions of celebrities, organisations or professionals
Contained expressed views related to their own mental health and lockdown	Contained views and opinions that were rarely related to mental health and lockdown
Was in English	Contained mainly tips, educational material and spiritual encouragement
	Was a livestream

the main aim was to understand the explicit reality as opposed to deeper constructs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

Five overarching themes were identified from the analysis of the YouTube vlog videos on the way mental health difficulties were experienced during the lockdown. The themes with their associated subthemes are shown in Figure 2 below.

Theme 1: Instability and Extreme States

This theme represented the individual's report of increased and unpredictable levels in mental health difficulties, specifically with emotions, motivation and physical symptoms including sleep problems and loss of appetite. These findings supported the existing theory of psychosocial stress, such that it is expected for psychological difficulties to increase in response to major stressors, such as the COVID-19 (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). However, the present findings demonstrated that stressful reactions were not typical for all individuals at the start of the lockdown.

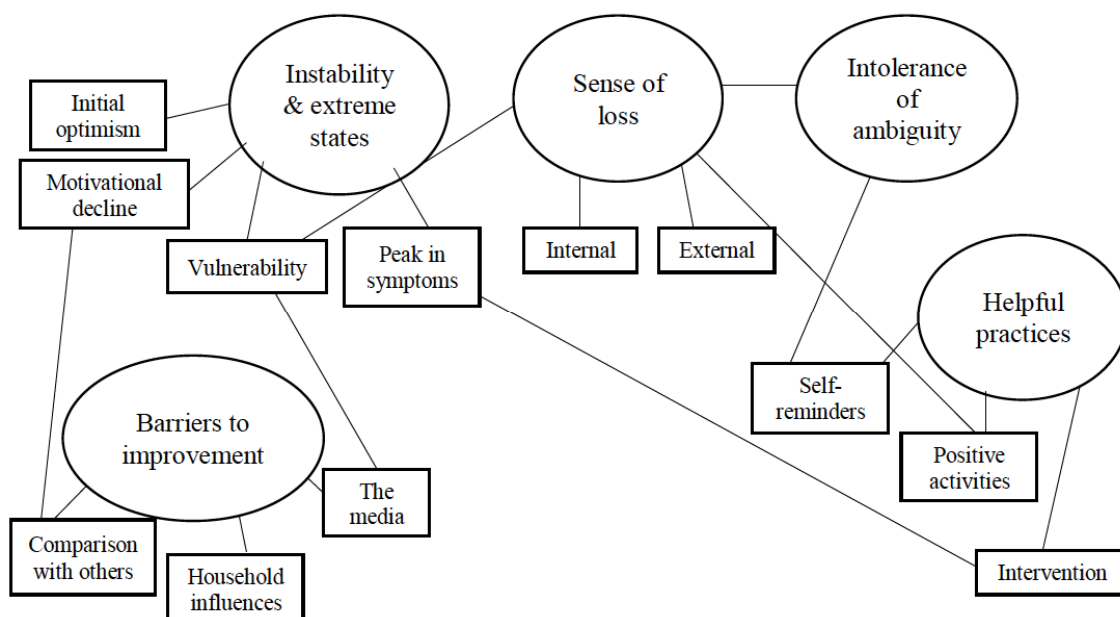


Figure 2: Thematic map showing main themes and sub-themes.

Initial Optimism

Ten participants initially welcomed the idea of staying home for a prolonged period of time. They anticipated opportunities to immerse in creativity and maximise their productivity within the context of autonomy with their time at home. However, eventually this period of optimism failed to meet their expectations.

I am gonna be just fine, I read, I am gonna get a chance to sleep and exercise the umm you know... processes that I have developed to help me on days where I am anxious and what have you. So I will be absolutely fine!...I was...for five days...(Vlogger 2).

One vlogger viewed her initial optimism in hindsight, as she explained:

It's strange I think if someone had told me last year that I'd have like you know...four to five months off work, I'd be like oh shit okay! I'd miss work but like I could get loads of reading done and drawing and painting and all these things I never normally have time for. But the reality is it has been the complete opposite (Vlogger 11).

These extracts demonstrated that vloggers had formed several positive expectations related to their productivity. These expectations may have been excessive in the context of coping through a lockdown, particularly when framed within the theory of motivation by Maslow (1970). It appears that the lockdown was viewed as an opportunity to engage in activities that fulfil needs of self-esteem, creativity and reaching one's potential that are higher on the hierarchy of needs (Neubauer & Martskvishvili, 2018). However, perhaps as the lockdown progressed and the COVID-19 worsened, the lower order needs took precedence over these higher order needs and individuals experienced a motivational decline, as explored in the following subtheme.

Motivational Decline

Approximately half of the vloggers eventually noted a significant deterioration in their level of motivation, which they found difficult to comprehend. For some, this decline was so severe that it was debilitating.

Literally there have been days that I haven't worked and I would just lay in bed all day and I would numb myself with like YouTube videos that I've watched before because of the familiarity of it... (Vlogger 12).

This statement also resonated with Vlogger 21, who was initially optimistic about engaging in creativity during the lockdown, as she explained that *"the first couple of weeks, the momentum just drained"*. This decline in motivation corresponds with Maslow's (1970) theory, as mentioned earlier. The lower level needs such as job security, food supplies and personal health likely became an issue of concern for individuals, as the lockdown progressed. In support of this, Taylor and colleagues (2020) recently validated a measure of COVID stress syndrome, which contains several items that represents concerns related to the lower level needs such as, danger, contamination fears, socioeconomic concerns and traumatic stress.

Vulnerability

A sense of psychological sensitivity emerged as a recurrent theme among the vloggers. Their descriptions suggested that the lockdown was encountered as an open door to the onset or amplification of symptoms such as anxiety, panic, depression and engagement in unhealthy behaviours (e.g. eating junk food, overthinking etc.) in the absence of protective mechanisms.

This lockdown has made me face my demons like...I had to like there's no work. I had finished my assignments, I don't have to physically go into school so you know what there's time for? There is time to overthink. There was this point where I just felt very, very useless (Vlogger 32).

One vlogger made direct attributions between the extension of lockdown in her country and the onset of anxiety symptoms. She stated:

...because I am not somebody who's had anxiety or been diagnosed or ever had a problem with my anxiety...but like the past I think it's that other week after the president announced that the lockdown is going to be extended and it shook me so hard (Vlogger 14).

These extracts confirmed previous findings and predictions specific to COVID-19 and the possibility that it may exacerbate existing issues (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco & Lyubomirsky, 2008) and lead to new onset of psychopathology (Hyland *et al.*, 2020; Iqbal & Dar, 2020).

Peak in Symptoms

The vloggers with pre-existing mental health conditions namely anxiety, depression, eating problems and alcohol-related problems, reported new and

significant levels of symptoms. There were differences in the progression of these symptoms, such that it was sudden for some and gradual for others.

So I think my anxiety has been mounting over the past few days and I had a panic attack earlier today which I feel...its weird I feel like my anxiety was like stacking up to a point (Vlogger 28)

These findings supported speculations that individuals with pre-existing conditions will be severely affected (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2020; Druss, 2020). Taylor and colleagues (2020) found associations between pre-existing psychopathology and the newly developed measure of the COVID stress syndrome. Thus, it is unsurprising that the vloggers experienced this peak in symptoms.

Theme 2: Sense of Loss

This theme referred to a sense of loss in different domains in the vloggers' lives, which made them vulnerable to psychological distress. This extended beyond external losses to more abstract types of loss.

Internal loss

Vloggers mentioned several internal losses such as personal goals, identity and purpose. They reported that the lockdown had somehow withheld a part of who they were, such that there was felt sense of internal incongruence.

for me that role of going from being someone who is quite independent out a lot to someone who is here all the time providing for everyone, I felt very much like a kind of 50's housewife (Vlogger 6).

External Loss

This sense of loss was also reflected in outward activities, namely those that vloggers felt they did not appreciate enough. Although these included external activities, some vloggers drew meaning from such activities. For example, one vlogger spoke about missing activities such as going out with friends and the purpose that this served in coping with school stress:

we were able to treat ourselves with club nights afterwards, restaurant meals, going out with friends, going to the cinema with friends, so it didn't feel so pressurising. But because of lockdown we can't do that anymore (Vlogger 18).

Regardless of whether it was an internal or external loss, there appeared to be a global loss of meaning.

This was apparent given that some vloggers experienced this loss to the extent that it resembled an existential crisis. They questioned their purpose, meaning of life and expressed a form of inner conflict (Gilliland & James, 1993). This was exemplified by Vlogger 35 stating " *It's a very dark question to ask, you know... why? What's the point of existence?*" These findings demonstrated that loss extended beyond the loss of activities and social relationships to include loss of meaning and purpose.

Theme 3: Intolerance of Ambiguity

This theme referred to the vlogger's attempts and difficulty in making sense of the pandemic-related circumstances, which also served as a source of distress. Similar to the last theme, there was a sense of loss in the certainty of the world, which many identified as difficult to accept.

It's just affecting me a lot and I feel like I am having sleepless nights because of the uncertainty of the future, like its so uncertain. What is gonna happen?...when is coronavirus gonna go? Is it gonna go? Are we ever gonna go back to normal? (Vlogger 17).

Drawing on trauma literature, it could be that vloggers encountered a sense of shattered assumptions, as proposed by Janoff-Bulman (1992). This occurs when one's fundamental beliefs about the world are suddenly impaired and are no longer valid, which can trigger distress for individuals. It is a rare phenomenon to experience the world in a suspended state as it occurred during the COVID-19 period. Thus, the vloggers found it difficult to understand and tolerate this sudden change in worldviews, beliefs and subsequent uncertainties.

Theme 4: Barriers to Improvement

This theme referred to the factors and influences that the vloggers identified as unhelpful for their mental health during the lockdown. These included factors that could also provide benefits for mental health, such as social media and family members.

The Media

Several vloggers referred to social media and the news as harmful for their mental health, such that it influenced their vulnerability to distress. For this reason, many vloggers made deliberate efforts to avoid such platforms.

I also used to watch the news a lot and I would be stuck up on the number of cases that we have, people dying and all that and its stirring up a lot of worries and what ifs (Vlogger 14).

Comparison with Others

There was a tendency for some vloggers to draw comparisons with others online, as they assessed their own productivity and relative mental state. Some vloggers expressed a felt sense of obligation to sustain themselves in a similar manner to others online, which was frustrating for some.

I feel like the people who were following along and watching people's day to day lives, it's kind of unfair because they're setting such high expectations for what people should be doing in their lives and I just don't find it realistic sometimes (Vlogger 18).

The impact of the media in the present study fell in line with recent findings. In a recent survey-based study in Wuhan, exposure to social media was associated with a 48% prevalence rate of anxiety and depressive symptoms (Gao *et al.*, 2020). The present study suggests that social media served as a portal for negative influences including comparison with others and virus-related fear from the news, as individuals spend time in social isolation.

Household Influences

A few vloggers spoke about their living circumstances as one of the unhelpful aspects of attempting to cope during lockdown. Some vloggers desired greater companionship, whereas others expressed the desire to feel "more lonely" from other family members.

Do I feel lonely? I don't...wouldn't necessarily say I feel lonely...I just if anything it would be nice to feel a little bit more lonely. I think I am just a bit overwhelmed (Vlogger 10).

These findings also confirmed recent predictions, such that prolonged periods at home are likely to result in some interpersonal difficulties in the household (Gruber *et al.*, 2020). This particular finding demonstrated that lockdown does not lead to social deprivation by default, as social contact at home can become excessive leading to mental health difficulties.

Theme 5: Helpful Practices

All vloggers recognized the need to engage in habits and activities that can improve their mental

state. They identified a range of activities that were carried out at home, which helped to invoke positive emotions, purpose, productivity and distract oneself from one's own thoughts and the ongoing pandemic.

Self-Reminders

Vloggers used reminders as a tool to cope with different aspects of the lockdown. These included reminding oneself of the inevitable end of lockdown, the lack of obligation to be as productive as others and the bigger picture of lockdown. For example, one vlogger spoke of the need to remember that health-care workers efforts towards helping to eliminate the virus:

When I feel down I'm gonna try and think of the nurses and all the workers on the frontline staff that are actually putting their lives on the line to help us (Vlogger 27).

Positive Activities

Many vloggers spoke of their engagement in a range of activities to help them cope and regain some purpose in their daily lives. These activities included those that elicited a sense a productivity and meaning such as spending time with family, exercising, painting, baking, creating and establishing a routine.

I feel like every day I've been...I've been feeling better and trying to do something to distract me. We've been playing some switch games like Mario party and stuff as a family and doing that just takes your mind off things a bit (Vlogger 23).

Although vloggers engaged with behaviour-based practices, it was evident that these were collective attempts to find meaning during the lockdown. This search for meaning has been conceptualized as a natural process of healing following significant stressors or traumas, such as the COVID-19 (Neimeyer & Sands, 2011). Recent studies based on the COVID-19 have found evidence to suggest that the ability to draw meaning from the current pandemic can be helpful for the alleviation of distress during lockdown (Milman, Lee & Meimeyer, 2020; Trzebiński, Cabański & Czarnecka, 2020).

Intervention

Some vloggers sought direct intervention from mental health services, as they experienced a peak symptoms. These vloggers described that a formal intervention was necessary for them, especially as they felt they were no longer able to cope.

I started doing CBT I think...which was maybe like the third or fourth week of lockdown. I'd self-referred myself to a mental health service because I felt that I wasn't being able to deal with things that were happening (Vlogger 22).

These findings were unsurprising, given that a wide-scale mental health crisis had been predicted in response to the pandemic (Caqueo-Urizar *et al.*, 2020; Lennon, 2020). Nevertheless, the findings demonstrated that only a small number of vloggers considered the use of mental health services and those that did access services, did so during the peak of their symptoms. Thus, perhaps therapy was considered as a last resort method of coping with mental health problems.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

In summary, the present study aimed to explore the ways in which mental health difficulties were experienced during the COVID-19 lockdown. The findings confirmed that individuals are prone to the experience of mental health problems during the lockdown, and highlighted some additional mechanisms and processes that contribute to the onset and maintenance of mental health problems.

The experience of instability and extremes in emotional states demonstrated that distress may not come up as the first default response during a lockdown. Individuals may initially have positive, albeit in many cases unrealistic, expectations prior to the experience of psychological problems. These findings hold implications for clinical practice, such that one's initial feelings and productivity or creativity expectations might be a target for future pandemic-tailored interventions. This focus might be valuable, given the inevitability of motivational decline and psychological distress despite these expectations.

The two themes including sense of loss and intolerance of ambiguity could be considered as the main processes that underlie the experience of negative emotions in the present study. Pandemic-tailored interventions might be valuable in helping individuals increase their tolerance of ambiguity and regain meaning, as they endure a future lockdown.

In addition, an area of concern has been identified, as the findings revealed that despite the pervasiveness of the mental health problems, only a few individuals considered formal interventions and the reason for this is not clear. These findings suggest that future

research is necessary to explore the perceptions around accessing psychological support during pandemics, as these perceptions will undoubtedly have had an impact on the way mental health difficulties were experienced. Interventions incorporating behavioural activation and cognitive restructuring strategies could be designed to be delivered online to help individuals deal with similar pandemic situations. It is well documented that behavioural activation and scheduling of personally meaningful activities have a positive impact on depression and anxiety levels but also hold the potential to increase intrinsic motivation (Mori *et al.*, 2018) and meaning salience (Hooker & Masters, 2018). Similarly, cognitive restructuring techniques could be employed to tackle maladaptive beliefs related to unrealistic expectations or intolerance of ambiguity (e.g., Beheshtian, Toozandehjani, & Tousi, 2020). Accordingly, a few researchers have started considering potential modifications to cognitive behavioural approaches to support persons in the midst of the pandemic (Altena *et al.*, 2020; Joseph *et al.*, 2020; Murphy *et al.*, 2020).

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The main strength of the present study is the use of real world data and the absence of influence by the researchers leading to higher ecological validity. Nevertheless, due to the use of naturally occurring data, there were some inconsistencies in the degree of depth between the vlogger's accounts, which is a general limitation when using this type of data (Sangeorzan *et al.*, 2019). There is also the question of whether the findings hold the potential for transferability given that the sample included YouTube vloggers only. However, these limitations affirm grounds for future research with methodology that will enable greater transferability, depth and exploration of non-vlogging populations.

CONCLUSION

The present study is one of the first studies to provide insight into the experiences of mental health difficulties within the confinements of the home during lockdown. The findings from the present study are noteworthy and hold valuable clinical implications for psychological interventions in response to future pandemic and lockdown situations. Further research is necessary to provide support for these findings, given the novelty of the pandemic and the lockdown phenomenon.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors confirm that there are no relevant financial or non-financial competing interests to report.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abdullah I. COVID-19: 'Threat and fear in Indonesia'. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 2020; 12(5): 488-490. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000878>
- [2] Ahmed MZ, Ahmed O, Aibao Z, Hanbin S, Siyu L and Ahmad A. 'Epidemic of COVID-19 in China and associated Psychological Problems'. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 2020; 51: 102092. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102092>
- [3] Altena E, Baglioni C, Espie CA, Ellis J, Gavriloff D, Holzinger B, Schlarb A, Frase L, Jernelöv S and Riemann D. 'Dealing with sleep problems during home confinement due to the COVID-19 outbreak: practical recommendations from a task force of the European CBT-I Academy'. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 2020; 29(4): e13052. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jsr.13052>
- [4] Beheshtian E, Toozandehjani H, & Tousei MRS. Comparison of modular cognitive-behavioral therapy and behavioral activation on the intolerance of uncertainty in students with generalized anxiety disorder. *Journal of Nursing and Midwifery Sciences*, 2020; 7(1): 30. https://doi.org/10.4103/JNMS.JNMS_29_19
- [5] Bhaskar R. (2008) *A Realist Theory of Science*. Verso, London.
- [6] Bonanno GA, Ho SMY, Chan JCK, Kwong RSY, Cheung CKY, Wong CPY and Wong VCW. 'Psychological resilience and dysfunction among hospitalized survivors of the SARS epidemic in Hong Kong: A latent class approach'. *Health Psychology*, 2008; 27(5): 659-667. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.27.5.659>
- [7] Braun V and Clarke V. 'Using thematic analysis in psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2006; 3(2): 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- [8] British Psychological Society (2017) *Ethics guidelines of internet-mediated research*. Leicester. St Andrews. British Psychological Society. [Online] [Accessed 29 June 2020] <https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Ethics%20Guidelines%20for%20Internet-mediated%20Research%20%282017%29.pdf>
- [9] Caqueo-Urizar A, Urzúa A, Aragón-Caqueo D, Charles CH, El-Khatib Z, Otu A and Yaya S. 'Mental health and the COVID-19 pandemic in Chile'. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 2020; 12(5): 521-523. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000753>
- [10] Chan SMS, Chiu FKH, Lam CWL, Leung PYV and Conwell Y. 'Elderly suicide and the 2003 SARS epidemic in Hong Kong'. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 2006; 21(2): 113-118. <https://doi.org/10.1002/gps.1432>
- [11] Chang SS, Stuckler D, Yip P and Gunnell D. 'Impact of 2008 global economic crisis on suicide: time trend study in 54 countries'. *BMJ*, 2013; 347: f5239-f5239. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.f5239>
- [12] Chatterjee SS, Barikar M and Mukherjee A. 'Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on pre-existing mental health problems'. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 2020; 51: 102071. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102071>
- [13] Clarke V and Braun V. 'Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning'. *Psychologist*, 2013; 26(2): 120-123.
- [14] Druss BG. 'Addressing the COVID-19 Pandemic in Populations With Serious Mental Illness'. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 2020; 77(9): 891-892. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.0894>
- [15] Fitzpatrick KM, Harris C and Drawve G. 'Fear of COVID-19 and the mental health consequences in America'. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 2020; 12(S1): S17-S2. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000924>
- [16] Gao J, Zheng P, Jia Y, Chen H, Mao Y, Chen S, Wang Y, Fu H and Dai J. 'Mental Health Problems and Social Media Exposure During COVID-19 Outbreak'. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. PLoS ONE, 2020; 15(4): e0231924. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0231924>
- [17] Gruber J, Prinstein MJ, Clark LA, Rottenberg J, Abramowitz JS, Albano *et al.* 'Mental health and clinical psychological science in the time of COVID-19: Challenges, opportunities, and a call to action'. *American Psychologist* 2020. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/desg9>
- [18] Holmes EA, O'Connor RC, Perry VH, Tracey I, Wessely S, Arseneault L, *et al.* 'Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: a call for action for mental health science'. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 2020; 5(6): 547-560. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(20\)30168-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(20)30168-1)
- [19] Hooker SA, & Masters KS. Daily meaning salience and physical activity in previously inactive exercise initiators. *Health Psychology*, 2018; 37(4): 344. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hea0000599>
- [20] Hyland P, Shevlin M, McBride O, Murphy J, Karatzias T, Bental RP, Martinez A and Vallières F. 'Anxiety and depression in the Republic of Ireland during the COVID-19 pandemic'. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 2020; 142: 249-256. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acps.13219>
- [21] Iqbal N and Dar KA. 'Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic: Furnishing experiences from India'. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 2020; 12(S1): S33-S34. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000770>
- [22] Jang SH. 'YouTube as an Innovative Resource for Social Science Research'. In: AARE 2011 Conference Proceedings. [online] [Accessed on 25th August 2020]. Available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.46.8.8748&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- [23] Janoff-Bulman R. *Shattered assumptions: Towards a new psychology of trauma*. New York: Free Press 1992.
- [24] Joseph SJ, Gonçalves AP, Paul A and Bhandari SS. 'Theoretical orientation of a range of psychological approaches to address mental health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic'. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 2020; 53: 102221. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102221>
- [25] Kackin O, Ciydem E, Aci OS and Kutlu FY. 'Experiences and psychosocial problems of nurses caring for patients diagnosed with COVID-19 in Turkey: A qualitative study'. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 2020; 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764020942788>
- [26] Ko CH, Yen CF, Yen JY and Yang MJ. 'Psychosocial impact among the public of the severe acute respiratory syndrome epidemic in Taiwan'. *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 2006; 60(4): 397-403. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1819.2006.01522.x>
- [27] Koushik NS. 'A population mental health perspective on the impact of COVID-19'. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 2020; 12(5): 529-530. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000737>
- [28] Lazarus RS and Folkman S. *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York Springer 1984.
- [29] Lennon JC. 'What lies ahead: Elevated concerns for the ongoing suicide pandemic'. *Psychological Trauma: Theory,*

- Research, Practice, and Policy, 2020; 12(S1): S118-S119.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000741>
- [30] Lopes BC da S and Jaspal R. 'Understanding the mental health burden of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom'. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 2020; 12(5): 465-467.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000632>
- [31] Maslow AH. (1970). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper & Row.
- [32] Milman E, Lee SA and Neimeyer RA. 'Social isolation and the mitigation of coronavirus anxiety: The mediating role of meaning'. *Death Studies*, 2020; 1-13.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1775362>
- [33] Mori A, Okamoto Y, Okada G, Takagaki K, Takamura M, Jinnin R & Yoshino A. Effects of behavioural activation on the neural circuit related to intrinsic motivation. *BJPsych open*, 2018; 4(5): 317-323.
<https://doi.org/10.1192/bjo.2018.40>
- [34] Munawar K and Choudhry FR. 'Exploring Stress Coping Strategies of Frontline Emergency Health Workers dealing Covid-19 in Pakistan: A Qualitative Inquiry'. *American Journal of Infection Control*, 2020; 000: 1-7
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajic.2020.06.214>
- [35] Murphy R, Calugi S, Cooper Z and Dalle Grave R. 'Challenges and opportunities for enhanced cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT-E) in light of COVID-19'. *The Cognitive Behaviour Therapist*, 2020; 13: e14.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1754470X20000161>
- [36] Neimeyer RA & Sands DC. Meaning reconstruction in bereavement: From principles to practice. In RA. Neimeyer, DL. Harris, HR. Winokuer, & GF. Thornton (Eds.), *Series in death, dying and bereavement. Grief and bereavement in contemporary society: Bridging research and practice*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group 2011.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203840863>
- [37] Naslund JA, Grande SW, Aschbrenner KA and Elwyn G. 'Naturally Occurring Peer Support through Social Media: The Experiences of Individuals with Severe Mental Illness Using YouTube'. *PLoS ONE*, 2014; 9(10): e110171.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0110171>
- [38] Neubauer AC and Martskvishvili K. 'Creativity and intelligence: A link to different levels of human needs hierarchy?' *Heliyon*, 2018; 4(5): p.e00623.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2018.e00623>
- [39] Nolen-Hoeksema S, Wisco BE and Lyubomirsky S. 'Rethinking Rumination'. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2008; 3(5): 400-424.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6924.2008.00088.x>
- [40] Roy D, Tripathy S, Kar SK, Sharma N, Verma SK and Kaushal V. 'Study of knowledge, attitude, anxiety & perceived mental healthcare need in Indian population during COVID-19 pandemic'. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 2020; 51: 102083.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102083>
- [41] Sangeorzan I, Andriopoulou P and Livanou M. 'Exploring the experiences of people vlogging about severe mental illness on YouTube: An interpretative phenomenological analysis'. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 2019; 246: 422-428.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2018.12.119>
- [42] Sibley CG, Greaves LM, Satherley N, Wilson MS, Overall NC, Lee CHJ, Milojev P, Bulbulia J, Osborne D, Milfont TL, Houkamau CA, Duck IM, Vickers-Jones R and Barlow FK. 'Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdown on trust, attitudes toward government, and well-being'. *American Psychologist*, 2020; 75(5): 618-630.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000662>
- [43] Sun N, Wei L, Shi S, Jiao D, Song R, Ma L, Wang H, Wang C, Wang Z, You Y, Liu S and Wang H. 'A qualitative study on the psychological experience of caregivers of COVID-19 patients'. *American Journal of Infection Control*, 2020; 48(6): 592-598
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajic.2020.03.018>
- [44] Taylor S, Landry CA, Paluszczek MM, Fergus TA, McKay D and Asmundson GJG. 'COVID stress syndrome: Concept, structure, and correlates'. *Depression and Anxiety*, 2020; 37(8): 706-714.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/da.23071>
- [45] Trzebiński J, Cabański M and Czarnecka JZ. 'Reaction to the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Influence of Meaning in Life, Life Satisfaction, and Assumptions on World Orderliness and Positivity'. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 2020; 25(6-7): 544-557.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2020.1765098>
- [46] Wilkinson D and Thelwall M. 'Researching Personal Information on the Public Web'. *Social Science Computer Review*, 2010; 29(4): 387-401.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439310378979>
- [47] World Health Organization (2020). *Coronavirus disease: Situation report 180*. [Online] [Accessed on 18th July 2020] https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200718-covid-19-sitrep-180.pdf?sfvrsn=39b31718_
- [48] Yip PSF, Cheung YT, Chau PH and Law YW. 'The Impact of Epidemic Outbreak'. *Crisis*, 2010; 31(2): 86-92.
<https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910/a000015>

Received on 20-01-2021

Accepted on 15-02-2021

Published on 22-02-2021

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12974/2313-1047.2021.08.1>

© 2021 Andriopoulou and Servina; Licensee Savvy Science Publisher.

This is an open access article licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>) which permits unrestricted, non-commercial use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the work is properly cited.