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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people of all ages and financial backgrounds. With the speed at which it arrived, society had to quickly adapt their lifestyles to quarantine. White-collar workers would be able to work from home, but blue-collar workers were laid off. Meanwhile, college education was held remotely for most classes. When one student may have the ability to relax in their parent's vacation house, another might have to risk their lives to work so their family doesn't go homeless. My experience with the pandemic has been common for many college students, and with many other people who need to work while supporting their families. Something like this has taken a big toll on people mentally, so, how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the mental health of college students? I find that mental health is never focused on, especially since it's an invisible disability for many people.

I have gone through a lot with the pandemic, and I still am. During the beginning of the pandemic, it was chaotic at home. From balancing schoolwork in an environment not meant for study, making sure to balance two jobs to not get lost on finances, and making sure to stay alive while there were no medical supplies to do so, it was very difficult. Throughout all of this though, there was never a big focus on how people dealt with this type of stress. We have only

focused on the physical symptoms, but not the invisible ones. Mental health should be of equal importance as well.

In my research, I expect to find topics dealing with how students dealt with their stress. Perhaps there will be many interviews or articles dealing with what students go through, and how they deal with it. General resources such as topics on mental health with the absence of COVID-19 can also be helpful, and it gives a basis for what my writing can build upon.

Source Entries

Citation 1

Casey, Nicholas. "College Made Them Feel Equal. The Virus Exposed How Unequal Their Lives Are." *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 4 Apr. 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/04/us/politics/coronavirus-zoom-college-classes.html>.

Summary

Nicholas Casey's article focuses on two students, Tatania Lathion, and Isabel Canning, who go to Haverford College, but the pandemic brings out how unequal their lives are. They take the same "Forced Migration and Refugees" political science class. Students hear narratives of migrants escaping failing economies in search of a brighter future, of life plans that were disrupted, and of the political pressures that made it all seem inevitable. As the coronavirus swept across Pennsylvania, Haverford College closed, and removed the majority of its students from their dorms. Ms. Canning was sitting at a vacation home on the Maine coast. While another young woman's father, a private equity investor, wanted the family to relocate to a nation where infection rates were declining. Meanwhile, another student's mother in Russia couldn't afford to fly her daughter back home. Before the pandemic, students all seemed to lead the same lives. In

the mornings, students ate the same cafeteria meal and slept in the same creaky beds at night.

Professor Isaacs, who teaches the political science course, got an email from one of her teaching assistants, Ms. Lathion, a college senior whose parents run a food truck, a few nights before the class was to recollect online in late March, it would be the last time the class gathered in person.

Ms. Lathion expressed her worries as she arrived home to discover that Latin Soul Grille, her family's food truck and sole source of income, was in trouble, which meant she would have to work during the pandemic. But Ms. Canning on the other hand, after carpooling to Maine with another student and leaving a family Land Rover on campus, Ms. Canning's family whisked her away to their summer house. This article shows the inequality between the two students outside of a college campus.

Reflection

This source is an article that focuses on the experience of two students, a student with a wealthy background, compared to a student who does not. I find the experience of Ms. Lathion is heartbreaking as it's similar to mine. She needs to focus on her education, but also on her finances at the same time. There is also a fear her parents may go homeless or catch the virus, which complicates her situation further. Casey's writing brings out the importance of realizing the inequalities Americans face, despite their status. College is seen as a golden ticket to life in many cultures, but college alone will not give people that opportunity, it's all dependent on income. With all of these stresses, the mental health of many students is suffering— even today.

Quotation

“Several nights before the class was to reconvene online in late March, Professor Isaacs received an email from one of her teaching assistants, Tatiana Lathion” Professor Isaacs, “watched her as she cried through this screen” (Casey)

Citation 2

Romeo, Annunziata et al. “Psychological Distress Among Italian University Students Compared to General Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” *International journal of environmental research and public health* 18.5 (2021): 2503–. Web.

Summary

In this study, Annunziata investigates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Italian university students, compared to workers. Social isolation, concern for one's health as well as the health of family members and friends, and uncertainty regarding academic success may all influence students' psychological well-being. His participants were required to fill out questionnaires and forms related to covid, and a few other quantitative forms. Overall, the results saw that university students showed higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms. The results make sense as students have more aspects to worry about such as finding a future job, focusing on their studies, and the stress of transitioning to remote learning, as well as not catching Covid.

Reflection

Annunziata's study investigates the stresses of college students compared to that of workers. The study finds that students were by far more stressed compared to workers. This makes sense to me as students generally have more things to work about, such as their education, and their future. I feel like his study should have gone over a few more factors other than just

people who work, and people who don't. Considering Casey's article as well, some students may need to work on top of their studies, creating a new category, and some people don't have to do anything, and just let the pandemic ride out with no worries. Overall, this is a very quantitative article that focuses on metrics and not really what people need to go through.

Quotation

“university students reported higher levels of both anxiety and depressive symptoms than general workers. Indeed, 75% and 38% of university students scored above the cutoff point for anxiety and depression, respectively... students' anxiety has been associated with the effect of COVID-19 on their studies.” (Annunziata 5)

Citation

CBS Sunday Morning. “The Mental Health Toll of Covid-19 - YouTube.” *YouTube*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFJrMJkbzMs>.

Summary

The video from CBS on mental health focuses on Wendy Sparrow, who had been wearing masks and using hand sanitizer regularly long before the COVID-19 pandemic had even begun. People thought it was strange, but Sparrow suffers from OCD, or Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, which in Sparrow's case, she has a compulsion to keep the area around her clean. The pandemic has made Sparrow's OCD even worse, as she can never be certain when she is truly free from germs in her area. The video claims that overall, prescriptions for antidepressants have gone up by 14%, showing how severe the mental health crisis is. For many mental health clinics, the wait time for new patients can take up to 3 or 4 weeks before they can see new patients, with the other option being admitted to the emergency room.

Reflection

I find that this is a great video to build a basis on why mental health is so important. Many of the comments under the video express their concerns about the lack of mental health services available, and many are relieved to see content that focuses on it, as mental health is considered a taboo subject in many cultures to this day. But for people like Wendy Sparrow, mental health must be focused on more than ever.

Quotation

“Mental health services have been under-funded for a long time, and they are still under-funded. One recent study shows more than half [54%] of behavioral health organizations have closed due to COVID-19”(5:08 - 5:19)

Conclusion

In my research, I found that mental health is a big issue, yet it is never focused on. After the pandemic hit, there were fewer services available to the public compared to before. Students like Tatania Lathion needed to focus on their education and keeping their family’s finances afloat, which took a toll on her mentally. It is important to me that I was greatly surprised that over 54% of mental health institutions closed, or had long wait times. I think the people who deny mental health is a real thing need to know about it. It’s because of people like them, that funding gets cut to many services. It’s important to learn about this subject since many people go through it, but it’s ignored since it’s an invisible disability for many, and a taboo subject. For example, my friend had a terrible experience with NYC’s mental health services as they made him wait for over 40 minutes, and they were very indifferent to his struggles. As I have mentioned before that I have also struggled through the pandemic, I think it brings for that the

American system of denying lower-income populations basic rights needs to be addressed. The US had been the only country throughout the pandemic that didn't do something for their people. For example, In Canada, households, despite their immigration status, would receive \$2,000 per person each month, while Americans were given a few thousand dollars three times throughout the entire pandemic. I believe money is a big factor in mental health as well since money causes stress for many people, but to even see a therapist costs hundreds per session, which is not covered by insurance for many people. People are usually blamed for their shortcomings, but many times it's how society is built, to keep certain people poor.