



Impact of COVID-19 on Undergraduate Rutgers Students

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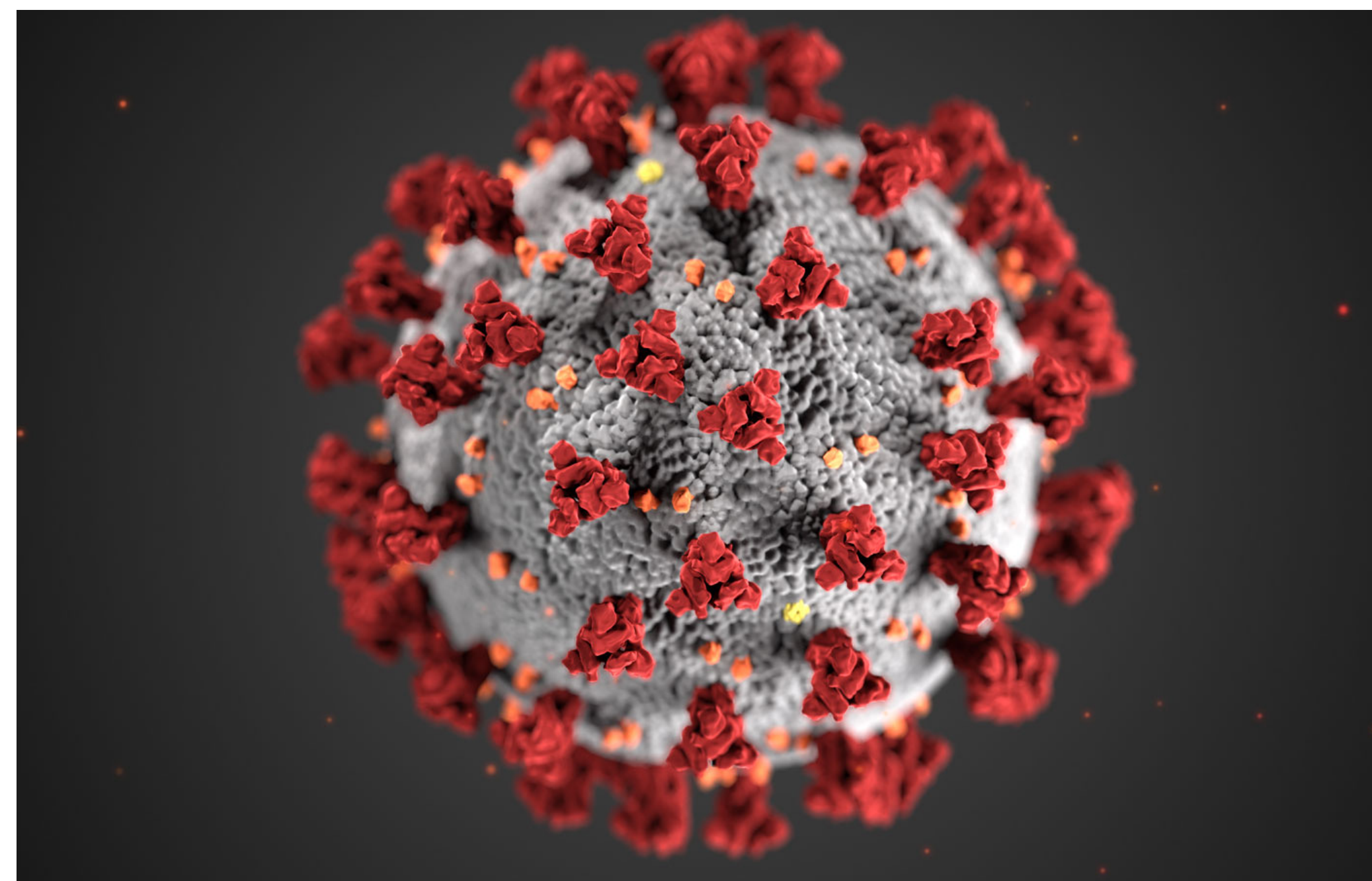
Research Purpose

Purpose Statement:

To comprehend the vulnerability of undergraduate Rutgers students' experience through the pandemic and use the results to make predictions for the general population of college students through understanding the impact of mental and physical health, academic progress, social interactions, and emotional health of the sample.

Research Questions:

What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Rutgers undergraduate students' academic progress, social interactions, mental, physical, and emotional health?



Previous Findings

- Students felt more isolated and distant from their support systems, causing a negative impact on their overall health (Aristovnik et al., 2021).
- Remote learning proficiency (RLP) decreased at the start of the pandemic (April-March 2020) as well as a decrease in motivation due to the lack of human connection (Katz et al., 2021).
- Students developed bad sleeping patterns. Some excessively overslept, while others lost sleep due to anxiety (Batra et al., 2021).
- Although anxiety escalated for both men and women, an overall increase amongst women was more common compared to men (Freuhwith et al., 2021).
- Online learning planned in advance had higher success rates; a reason why so many students struggled during the Spring 2020 semester was because most of the curriculum was planned for an in-person course (Iglesias-Produt et al., 2021).

Initial / Major Findings

An initial analysis was performed out of the first 249 participants which showed:

- Knowledge retention, focus, and academic motivation decreased
- Students felt more bored, lonelier, and less happy
- Depression and anxiety levels increased
- An overall loss in learning quality
- GPAs increased

Context about the Study / Demographic Information

- 250 out of the 500 participants were Freshmen due to the large enrolment of freshmen in General Psychology courses at Rutgers University.
- Part of the General Psychology course work is to participate in experiments and surveys to receive Rutgers Participation Units (RPU's).
- From the 249 early participants, the Fall 2019 semester enrolled students: Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors (excluding the Freshman class who at the time were enrolled in High School) had a GPA analysis conducted comparing Fall 2019 to Spring and Fall 2020 GPAs.

Future Directions

- Variables of the study are still being analyzed.
- More detail about the COVID-19 stressors, following CDC guidelines, the connection between distractions and progress, as well as retention levels will be analyzed.
- The initial analysis mentioned above will be used to generalize the broader population of Rutgers students.

Represented References

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What happened during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

- As of March 2020, universities shut down due to a global pandemic
- COVID-19 spread worldwide, shutting down all facilities except for essential locations (such as supermarkets, hospitals, pharmacies, etc.).
- Universities, including Rutgers, converted to a 100% virtual environment (excluding certain research and lab facilities).
- Zoom, Canvas, BigBlue Button, and Webex were some of the platforms used at Rutgers University.
- Students and staff were limited to meet in-person due to CDC guidelines.

Methodology:

- Quantitative method approach was used by administering an online survey through Qualtrics to 500 Rutgers University undergraduate students during the Spring 2021 semester.
- SPSS is the software which will be used to analyze the results.
- Mental and physical health, emotional health, and academic progress-based questions were asked through multiple choice, short answer, and scaling questions within the survey.

Examples:

- Depression and anxiety scales
- GPA changes
- Different forms of distractions
- Financial status (contributes to stress)
- Number of people living at home or on campus with the individual
- Internet connection
- Number of shared devices at home