

Well-being and Academic Performance of Memorial University Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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STUDENT WELLNESS
AND COUNSELLING CENTER

Introduction

Requests for services at Memorial University's Student Wellness and Counselling Center have increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 2021-2022 academic year (and up to presently) there have been 4000 requests (increase of 30%). (SWCC Counselling Portal, 2021)

According to the NCHA survey, students at MUN have been personally impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic;

- (n = 2875) 8.7% of students had a loved one die from COVID-19.
- (n = 2877) 11.9% have a loved one experiencing long term effects.
- (n = 2253) 38.4% were concerned about returning to Memorial University.
- (n = 2254) 43.6% were concerned about paying for tuition due to the pandemic.
- (n = 2248) 57.1% were concerned about job prospects for the near future due to the pandemic.

We are the first institution in Canada using the NCHA survey to study this topic.

Externalizing problems and attention problems have increased in university students after the onset of COVID-19. Those enrolled in wellness programs were less affected than those not. (Copeland et al., 2021)

Research Question

Do students who are concerned about COVID-19 have increased loneliness, psychological distress, suicidal behaviour, and more challenges, and distress, in their academics?

Method

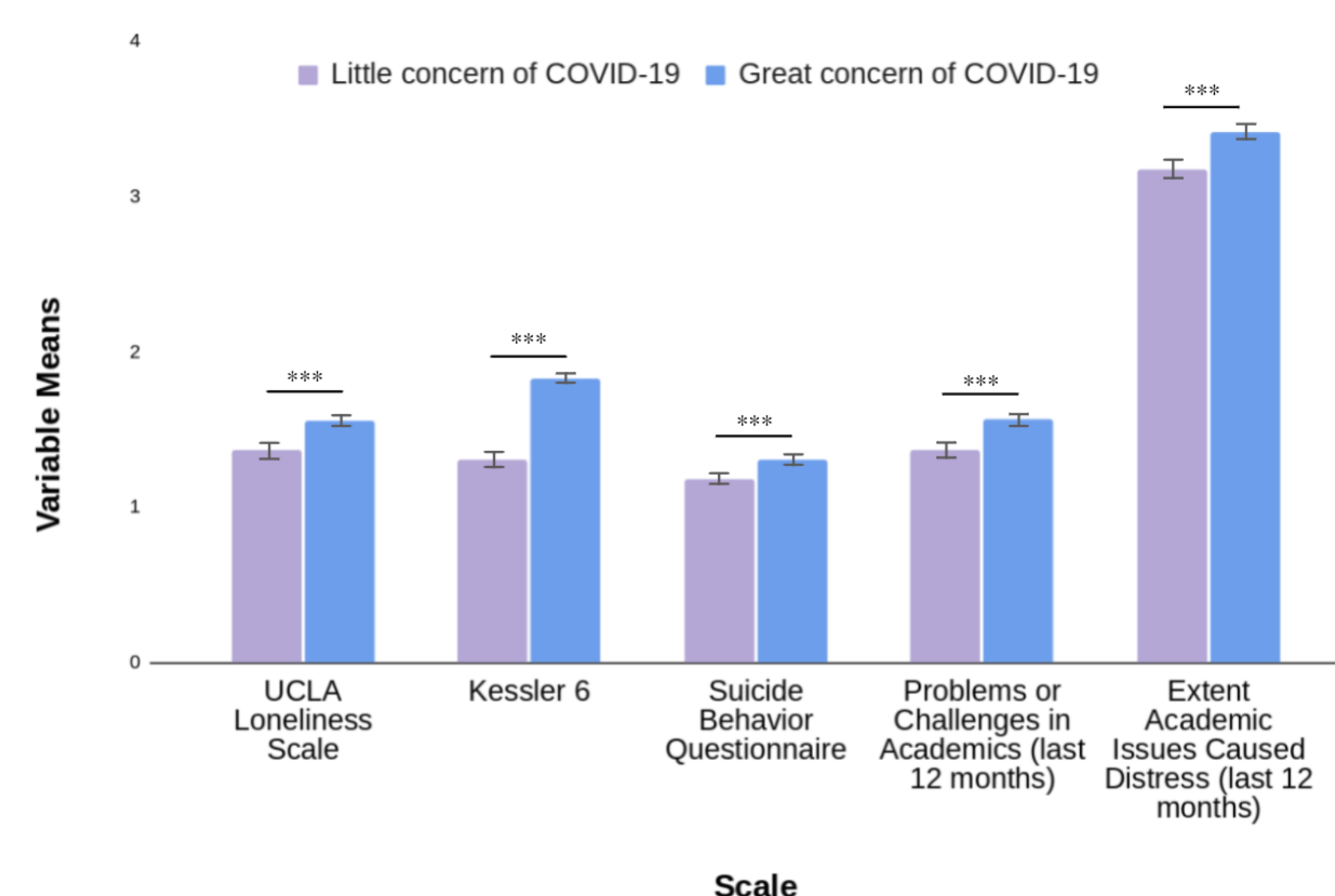
- ACHA-National College Health Assessment (NCHA).
- All registered students in Spring/Summer semester (2021) on all Memorial campuses.
 - Participation rate: $n = 2297$
- **IV:** How concerned students were about COVID-19 (little and great).
- **DV:** UCLA Loneliness Scale, Kessler 6, Suicide Behavior Questionnaire, Problems or Challenges in Academics (last 12 months), Extent Academic Issues Caused Distress (last 12 months)



Results

Figure 1

Comparison of Loneliness, Distress, Suicidal Behaviour, and Academic Issue Means In Students



*** $p < 0.001$

Students who had greater concern over COVID-19 scored higher on the UCLA loneliness scale, Kessler 6 psychological distress scale and the suicide behavior questionnaire ($p < .001$). They also reported more problems or challenges in academics, and these academic issues caused them more distress ($p < .001$).

Table 1 Means For Loneliness, Psychological Distress, Suicidal Behaviour, And Challenges And Distress In Academics For Students With Little And Great Concern Of COVID-19

Variable	Little concern			Great concern			Sig
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	
UCLA Loneliness Scale	1.37	.482	495	1.56	.496	1853	***
Kessler 6	1.31	.621	480	1.83	.832	1834	***
Suicide Behavior Questionnaire	1.18	.387	492	1.31	.464	1830	***
Problems or Challenges in Academics (last 12 months)	1.37	.483	494	1.564	.496	1854	***
Extent Academic Issues Caused Distress (last 12 months)	3.17	.7497	182	3.416	.692	1026	***

*** $p < 0.001$

Table 2 Results of Independent Samples t Test Comparing Students With Little Concern and Great Concern of COVID-19 in Loneliness, Psychological Distress, Suicidal Behaviour, And Challenges And Distress In Academics

Variable	95% CI	t	df
UCLA Loneliness Scale	-.244, -.146	-7.813***	2346
Kessler 6	-.603, -.444	-12.874***	2312
Suicide Behavior Questionnaire	-.174, -.085	-5.691***	2320
Problems or Challenges in Academics (last 12 months)	-.242, -.145	-7.733***	2346
Extent Academic Issues Caused Distress (last 12 months)	-.357, -.135	-4.359***	1206

*** $p < 0.001$

Conclusions & Discussions

Students who are more concerned about COVID-19 were more **lonely** and **psychologically distressed**; and had more **suicidal behaviours** and **academic challenges**.

Appropriate supports within MUN should be put in place for students who are experiencing pandemic related distress.

This survey included students attending MUN at a distance.

According to the NCHA survey, students are generally happy with how MUN has handled the pandemic;

- (n = 2877) 62.6% of students felt their professors were supportive.
- (n = 2875) 90.8% report following campus policies.