

A1 Problem Space & Research Plan

Group Number: 5

Group Name: Cool Health Guides

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PROBLEM SPACE

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated health concerns for many worldwide. Our research will primarily focus on investigating the effects COVID-19 lockdowns have had on the mental health of undergraduate university students at the University of Toronto. Our team aims to gain a broad understanding of the conditions students find themselves in, so none of the research will focus exclusively on a specific mental health issue. Some interest will also be given to the different coping mechanisms students used and to what degree each mechanism has been effective.

RESEARCH PLAN

Our group has identified three main stakeholders: University Students, Professors, and Teaching Assistants (TAs). You can find descriptions on how we plan to conduct primary research through surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

SURVEYS

Surveys are most frequently conducted online and offer a convenient solution for gathering data from a larger population, in which we have decided to collect information from university students, TAs and professors. Through these surveys we hope to identify problem areas of students by asking questions regarding their mental health, lifestyle changes, and if they are getting the support they need. The questions for TAs and professors will be more focused on how their observations and interactions with their students have differed from prior to the pandemic. In regards to how we will find university students to complete the survey, we will ask our university friends and peers by sending them the link to the online survey. We also plan on kindly emailing our university Professors and TAs.

INTERVIEWS

Next, we will conduct semi-structured one-to-one interviews, which can be run online or in person. We will set up some basic questions, and depending on the interviewees' comfort level, we can ask more in-depth questions accordingly. For university students, we would like to ask questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their mental health and ideal services that would aid their academic life and overall university experience. We plan to go around the three campuses and invite students to participate in the interview. We will also interview professors and teaching assistants from all three UofT campuses. To reach the teaching staff, we will send emails to the professors and ask about their availability and contact list for TA. When interviewing professors and teaching assistants, we hope to learn about their observations on students' mental health and recommendations on mental health resources. Furthermore, we can also ask about professors' suggestions on helping their students overcome this challenging time.

FOCUS GROUPS

Lastly, running focus groups will be a critical data source for our primary research. We will collect data from a small group of professors and teaching assistants by sending emails to the professors and TAs asking about their availability. Like our interviews, we will conduct focus groups online or in-person, depending on the convenience of professors and teaching assistants from all three UofT campuses. In these focus groups, we hope to collect data that clearly exemplifies the connection between the mental health of students and COVID-19; recommendations on mental health resources; recommendations to the university regarding the transition to and from remote learning; and other information related to the university, mental health and COVID-19.

All in all, with the three primary research methods: surveys, interviews, and focus groups, we aim to gather more information about the mental health of university students during COVID-19. We believe after exploration of this problem space; we will find the real problem and come up with a product that will help university students through the difficult COVID-19 time.

SOURCES FOR SECONDARY RESEARCH

CHEN, Yuxin (Katy) - Hamza, C. A., Ewing, L., Heath, N. L., & Goldstein, A. (2021). When social isolation is nothing new: A longitudinal study on psychological distress during COVID-19 among university students with and without pre-existing mental health concerns. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne*, 62(1), 20-30. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cap0000255>

EL BESTAWY, Mahmoud - Statistics Canada. (2021, March 4). *Impacts on mental health*. Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. Retrieved May 15, 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/2020004/s3-eng.htm>

HOSSAIN, Farin - Horgos, B., Soria, K. M., Chirikov, I., & Jones-White, D. (2020). *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students with emotional or mental health concerns or conditions*. SERU Consortium, University of California - Berkeley and University of Minnesota <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/83m75056>

LI, Zhuoqian (Allison) - Savage, M. J., James, R., Magistro, D., Donaldson, J., Healy, L. C., Nevill, M., & Hennis, P. J. (2020). Mental health and movement behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic in UK university students: Prospective cohort study. *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, 19, 100357. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2020.100357>

PATEL, Aarti - Lischer, S., Safi, N. & Dickson, C. Remote learning and students' mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic: A mixed-method enquiry. *Prospects* (2021). <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1007/s11125-020-09530-w>

RAHMAN, Naslin - Caitlin A. Stamatis, Hannah C. Broos, Stephanie E. Hudiburgh, Sannisha K. Dale, Kiara R. Timpano. (2021, November 31). A longitudinal investigation of COVID-19 pandemic experiences and mental health among university students. <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1111/bjc.1235>

ASSIGNMENT ATTRIBUTION

CHEN, Yuxin (Katy)

- Brainstormed the different possible health problem spaces with the rest of the team.
- Actively participate in all discussions.
- Edited the interview section in the research plan with Farin.
- Edited the conclusion of the research plan.
- Added a source of secondary research.

EL BESTAWY, Mahmoud

- Brainstormed different aspects of health that we can research (ended up landing on mental health consequences of COVID).
- Actively participated in calls with the rest of the team.
- Wrote “PROBLEM SPACE” section of assignment.
- Worked with Aarti to write the “Focus Group” section of the document.
- Redesigned/restructured document to make it more professional.
- Added a source of secondary research.

HOSSAIN, Farin

- Brainstormed ideas for possible health problem spaces with the team
- Participated in group discussions
- Edited the interview section in the research plan with Katy
- Added a source of secondary research

LI, Zhuoqian (Allison)

- Brainstormed the different possible health problem spaces with the rest of the team.
- Participated in group discussions
- Worked with Naslin on the survey section in research plan
- Added a source of secondary research.

PATEL, Aarti

- Brainstormed different aspects of health that we can research.
- Brainstormed the different possible health problem spaces with the rest of the team.
- Brainstormed with the rest of the team the types of primary research methods we want to use and which one would be better suited for us.
- Actively participated in calls with the rest of the team.
- Worked with Mahmoud to write the “Focus Group” section of the document.
- Edited the A1.GroupForms document
- Added a source of secondary research.

RAHMAN, Naslin

- Brainstormed the different possible health problem spaces with the rest of the team.
- Participated in group discussions
- Worked with Allison on the survey section in research plan and edited as needed
- Added a source of secondary research.