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Navigating the Mind: Mental Health Struggles Among College Students Throughout and Post Pandemic

Megan Lempke

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HONORS THESIS



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_ Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation
with honors in the Bryant University Honors Program
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ABSTRACT

Several studies have reported that the coronavirus pandemic has contributed to the rise in stress, anxiety, and depression levels among college students. This has left mental health professionals at a loss and overwhelmed with the number of new cases during this time. Research has been conducted and has found that these levels have risen because of the pandemic, the lock down, personal factors, and their new learning environment which includes academics as well. Most of the research that has been done focuses on before the pandemic and during the pandemic, but not much research has been conducted for after the pandemic. Data will be collected through an online survey distributed to Bryant University students and potentially other college students within the state of Rhode Island using order effects. The survey will be conducted through Qualtrics, a commonly used survey platform for collecting quantitative and qualitative data through Bryant University. In conclusion, this thesis's intent is to produce research that can compare college students' anxiety levels during the pandemic to after the pandemic in order to help the mental health professional field.

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health has been a fighting battle for decades and it is not just a simple fix. It includes the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of any person, and it is depicted in each person differently. Not only are the disorders depicted differently, but they also range with severity differently in each person. There are a lot of different things within a person that can be affected due to having a mental illness or a disorder. Some things that can change are a person's thinking, feelings, actions, how they handle their stress, relate to others, and how they make their choices. There are also a lot of stigmas around mental health that have emerged through different generations over many years.

College students now are one of the most susceptible pool of people for mental health disorders to emerge within. It can be developed at any time within your life, but they are mostly shown throughout childhood and adolescent years going into their adult lives as well. College is a big step in anyone's life because it is usually the first-time children are away from their parents where they can make their own decisions, but also a more rigorous academic life. Uprooting the students' lives to go to college can also add to mental health disorders based off of personal and academic reasons. This can lead to the student having mental health issues.

Coronavirus affected the whole world which includes college students. When the pandemic struck us, it forced the world to go into quarantine and isolate from others or stay 6 feet apart when outside. The pandemic caused a lot of panic throughout the world which in turn affected people's mental health. Furthermore, causing a mental health crisis within the world leaving the professionals uncertain about what to do. Therefore, by looking into the college student population there will be evidence provided as to why their mental health has changed based on their learning environment and other factors that play a role in mental health in order to help mental health professionals to treat people better based on the circumstances.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Mental health consists of many different disorders that affect each person differently. More specifically, this investigation will be conducted on anxiety levels among college students from before the pandemic in an in-person learning environment to during the pandemic in an online learning environment. Risk factors of these mental health disorders include financial issues, suicide, and social isolation. Anxiety is feeling fear, dread, and or uneasiness (“Anxiety”). The pandemic came into play in March 2020, which caused the whole world to go into panic. Stress, anxiety, and depression are the three leading mental health disorders within college students’ lives; these mental health disorders occurred before the COVID-19 pandemic but also increased during the pandemic and in an online learning environment. Studying this topic will be necessary to the field of psychology because it will be able to provide further information and research into college students' mental health. This research will also help counselors, psychiatrists, and therapists better understand what is going on with college students from the transition of being in an online learning environment to being back in an in-person learning environment. With this additional research, mental health professionals will be able to learn and alter the way they help college students if it is needed.

The “big picture” of all the literature is to see the anxiety prevalence, and risk factors from before the pandemic to during the pandemic. Half of the literature emphasizes information from before the pandemic, still being in an in-person learning environment. This literature will be able to focus on different themes of mental health for college students. These themes are risk factors other than academics and academics themselves. The other half of the literature will focus on the mental health of college students during the pandemic. This literature will focus on how COVID-19 affected the mental health of college students based on the restrictions put into place and academics. Therefore, half of the literature focuses on before the pandemics and the other half focuses on during the pandemic. These articles can provide further information on the mental health of college students through risk factors, their personal life, and their academic life. Overall, without a study done comparing the mental health of college students before and during the pandemic, the mental health field will not

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progress, which will not help the college student population and the generations after.

Therefore, the importance of the study that will be conducted is about college students' anxiety levels during the pandemic to after the pandemic in different learning environments.

Mental Health in College Students Before the Pandemic

This theme is centered around the risk factors that include academics and other personal factors that have caused college students to have anxiety before the pandemic occurred. Being a student directly out of high school, a transfer student, or an international student also plays a role in their anxiety levels.

Risk Factors other than Academics

In a study done by Beiter, et al they were able to use the method of a survey to look at mental health within college students. Anxiety is present throughout a lot of college students' lives and is caused by a lot of different factors going on from being in high school to going to college. The risk factors that have been mentioned are the transition from high school to college because it is a different environment. Not only does the transition cause stress, anxiety, and depression (SAD) but it can also cause homesickness, appetite disturbances, and concentration problems (Beiter et. al., 2015). On top of the transition there are other aspects in our lives that college students care about as well. Some of these are body image, satisfaction in life, self-esteem, financial stability, and poor sleeping habits (Beiter et. al., 2015). The results of the study show that finances, quality of sleep, relationship with friends and family, overall health, body image, and self-esteem are what caused the most SAD within a college student (Beiter et. al., 2015). All of these risk factors lead to the university not only needing to address the academic side but also the personal well-being and mental health of their students.

In another study conducted by Cheung, et al. they are using the same method of using a survey but this one was cross-sectional. Based on this survey they were able to look at the other risk factors that affected the college students besides their academics based on specific groups of students and what could affect them going into college. Not only are they experiencing the transition as being a first-year university student, but they are also experiencing the transition of adolescence to adulthood. On top of the transition, they are

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dealing with gender, accommodations, and geographical differences between the different groups.

This study split college students into four different groups which includes mainstream students which are right out of high school, community college transfer students, international students with a specificity in Chinese students, and then student athletes. Mainstream college students are finding out that different countries provide different mental health problems and that students are at different levels of academic performance (Cheung et. al., 2020).

Community college transfer students are experiencing transfer shock, college campus shock, and having the feeling of being a freshman all over again (Cheung et. al., 2020). These factors have led these students to experience more mental health issues which can lead to personal factors of social anxiety, family distress, and having a part time job. International students SAD levels come from experiencing culture shock and more specifically for the Chinese students it is based on a new living environment on top of culture shock (Cheung et. al., 2020). It has also been found that these types of students do not reach out for mental health support as well, because they end up being more reliant on informal support networks such as family and friends (Cheung et. al., 2020). Lastly, student athletes have to be able to maintain the high demands of keeping their physical fitness levels in order to perform at the collegiate level along with their mental health. These students may also experience sleep disturbances, eating disorders, substance abuse, suicide, self and public stigma, and negative attitudes from their coach (Cheung et. al., 2020). The results are that community college transfer students have the highest risk for SAD while mainstream students are next on the list.

In the third study concluded Mofatteh in 2020 he used a different method and used primary research articles, systemic reviews, clinical trials, case reports, and other literature to look into mental health. His results indicated that, compared to the general population, college students have a higher prevalence of SAD. The risk factors that go into it other than academics are personal, health, societal, and occupational issues which can either directly or indirectly affect their mental health (Mofatteh, 2020). Having poor mental health that is also untreated can lead to alcohol and substance abuse, reduced empathetic behavior, relationship responsibility, lack of self-confidence, and suicidal thoughts (Mofatteh, 2020). SAD can also be shown in different ways

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for each college student. Some ways are loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, lack of concentration, lack of enthusiasm and concern, and poor hygiene (Mofatteh, 2020). Overall, although all of his research was done differently, he was still able to conclude that SAD is relevant within college students and that there are other factors other than academics that play into it.

Risk Factors that are based on Academics

Going back to the first study that was done by Beiter, et al they also found evidence that academics play a role in increasing college students' anxiety. Academics are the most important when it comes to being a college student, but there also comes pressures with it that affect the mental health of the students. The most common pressure is academic pressure. Academic pressure is reaching a certain grade within a class, taking a test, time management, but also the volume of material that needs to be learned by the student (Beiter et. al., 2015). The risk factors that affect their mental health the most are academic performance, the pressure to succeed, and post-graduation plans.

Referring back to the case study done by Cheung et al, they were able to notice other academic issues that can occur coming from geographically different locations, but also starting at different times. Mainstream students will experience SAD based on academic performance (Cheung et. al., 2020). Coming from different areas in the world there will be different levels of preparation that their previous high school gave them. Some students might be more prepared than other students which leads to increased SAD levels if they feel that they are behind other students coming right in. International students have to experience a different academic environment that they are not used to, the knowledge and practice skills for everyday life, and the delay in seeking help from professors (Cheung et. al., 2020). According to Mofatteh's study college students with poor and untreated mental health it will influence their academic performance which includes lower academic integrity, but the academic environment also affects their academics. (Mofatteh, 2020).

Overall, these three studies can attest to the fact that mental health in college students is not only based on academics and that there are other factors that affect them as well. These

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additional factors need to be included in the final diagnosis and treated as well as the academic side.

Mental Health in College Students During the Pandemic

This theme is centered around the idea that the COVID-19 pandemic added additional anxiety to college students than they already had before. The mental health community started seeing many more cases of anxiety during the pandemic. Many professionals were uncertain on how to help college students and are still uncertain on how to help. The following studies will show that the prevalence for SAD went up to due to academics and other personal life factors as well.

Mental Health of College Students was Affected by the Pandemic Restrictions

In a study done by McLafferty and others they were able to conduct a study through online surveys about depression, anxiety, and suicidal behavior during the pandemic. The prevalence during the pandemic for stress, anxiety, and depression were 32%, 34%, and 30%, respectively and the prevalence for suicidal ideation was 11% during this time as well (McLafferty et. al., 2021). Based on this study college students are more at risk for mental health issues due to COVID-19 because they had to go through a change from having a social life to a reduction in socialization, closure of social venues, social distancing, social isolation, and worrying about their loved ones (McLafferty et. al., 2021). The results of this study are able to tell us that first-year college students has the most impact creating elevated levels of mental health issues, and second year students experienced a decrease in anxiety, whereas there was no variation to suicidal behaviors (McLafferty et. al., 2021). According to Gopalan et al, who also did a study based on social isolation, anxiety, and depression within college students results with first year students have a lower sense of belonging compared to their peers (Gopalan et. al., 2022). This sense of belonging was taken away during the years of pandemic by being online. College students need the sense of belonging to help with their mental health, showing the importance of an inclusive environment (Gopalan et al., 2022). Without it comes depressive symptoms and to a lesser extent anxiety among all college students, therefore having online classes lead to more mental health issues within college students.

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The second study that was looked at was done by Oh, Marinovich, et al to look into the anxiety of United States college students based off of the findings from the Healthy Minds Survey sent out in 2020. The method approach that was used was analyzing data from online surveys that were sent out from September to December in 2020 to then use the multivariable logistic regression and examined the associations with the COVID-19 dimensions.

Over the pandemic the United States faced a lot of cases of COVID-19 which led to a lot of deaths as well. The way society functioned drastically changed which led to distressing, isolating situations, discrimination, financial strain, illness of loved ones, and a caretaker burden which all lead to an increase in anxiety (Oh et. al., 2021). The students throughout this study reported that their anxiety levels during the pandemic had increased and that half of those students also reported that they couldn't adequately cope with the anxiety (Oh et. al., 2021). The results of this study have shown that anxiety levels are associated with the overall concern for the pandemic, financial distress, and infection (Oh et.al., 2021). With these findings from the study there is evidence that the pandemic had affected college students' mental health and increased the levels of anxiety that they were feeling before the pandemic.

Wang, et al were able to look into the prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms during the pandemic by using a large cross-sectional online survey. They then used the self-rating anxiety scale. The exacerbation of the COVID-19 pandemic was on a large scale, and it spread very fast. The spread of this viral infection also led to the exacerbation of mental health problems such as anxiety throughout students and the general population. More specifically, the isolation of college students increased the depressed moods based on their original life and work plans being disrupted which leads to the increase of mental health within the college students (Wang et. al., 2020). Although the results concluded that the prevalence of anxiety was only 7.7% (Wang et. al., 2020). Therefore, this study was able to provide evidence that because of the tragedy and the drastic change that was going on with the pandemic that it affected college students' mental health.

Another survey was done by Huang on the intolerance of uncertainty and anxiety among college students during the re-emergence of COVID-19. The evidence of the pandemic affecting people's mental health on anxiety will be long lasting. Since there has been an

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increase in mental health awareness in all countries that also means that there is an increase in treating mental illness which increases the cost of it. Within college students the prevalence of anxiety was 41.1% and there was an increase that was observed from the pandemic (Huang et al., 2023). The fear of the unknown is the biggest factor that leads to the increase in anxiety. The uncertainty led to the students feeling confused and reacting negatively to it (Huang et al., 2023). The results of the study displayed that the intolerance of uncertainty was positively related to anxiety and that it directly affects anxiety which also leads to having a weaker relationship among college students that have a lower family function (Huang et al., 2023). With this last study it was also able to give more evidence into how the pandemic has affected college students' mental health.

Mental Health of College Students and their Academics:

In a study done by Zimmermann, et al they were able to look into the initial impact of COVID-19 on college students by using a series of questionnaires. Initially the risk factors that were seen through disruption to the college student's life through the closing of schools, social distancing, missing important experiences, living with parents again, and financial difficulties (Zimmermann, 2021). This resulted in a prevalence of anxiety at 36%, respectively (Zimmermann, 2021). The results of the study were able to conclude that suicidal ideation, impairment due to distress, and anxiety all increased due to the pandemic (Zimmermann, 2021). Since, universities went online there because a lot of internet use for college students which lead to problematic internet use which increased the student's anxiety levels. Overall, Education was reported to be the largest impacted throughout the pandemic with the result of 93.3% of students reporting a negative impact on their education (Zimmermann, 2021). Throughout this study it was also shown that a low number of participants actually looked for medical professional help. In the end this study is able to give more information about how academics were affected by the pandemic.

Academics were hit very hard when these students had to change from the in-person learning environment to an online learning environment. Going to an online learning environment led to a lot of uncertainties when it came to taking exams, tests, and quizzes (McLafferty et al., 2021). Not only were there uncertainties but there are increases in academic pressures,

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academic competitiveness, financial concerns, and concern for the future (McLafferty et. al., 2021). All of these factors have led to colleges students having an increase in their mental health. The pandemic played a big role in their mental health on top of their personal factors and their academics.

In another study conducted by Chang, et al they specifically looked at anxiety in college students through different literature articles and studies. Since universities closed their campuses and went to an online learning environment college students got a reduction in face-to-face communication which led to extreme amounts of screen time and a reduction in physical activity. Along with this some other risk factors that are related back to sleep patterns and fear of the uncertainty of the future (Chang, 2021). From the results it is clear that anxiety levels went up by 31% (Chang, 2021). From this study it is also clear that the pandemic also affected students' academics and their education. In a similar study done by Conrad et al, there results are that college students are now experiencing COVID-19 grief due to mandatory relocation after the campus shut down. This resulted in loneliness and anxiety compared to the students who did not have to relocate (Conrad et al., 2021). Students who did have to relocate and leave their items behind left them in a state of worry, grief, generalized anxiety, and PTSD symptoms (Conrad et al., 2021). Conrad et al, were able to conclude that the mandatory relocation resulted in worse psychological outcomes.

A third study was done by White specifically looking at the stress and anxiety of college students through online surveys. The studies that have been done have shown a spike in anxiety which comes from different risk factors. College students' mental health declined due to personal factors such as financial security, urban living, and access to family support (White, 2022). Whereas it also declined due to the closer of their campus, delays in their degrees, economy, and getting a job (White, 2022). The results of the study are able to show that anxiety was increased during the pandemic. Therefore, after all of these studies it is clear that the pandemic has affected not only college students' personal life but also their academics.

Lastly, Copeland et al, has been able to see some COVID-19 impacts on college students' mental health and wellness. The objective of this study was to be able to determine the impact

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of the COVID-19 disease on the emotions, behaviors, and wellness behaviors of first-year college students (Copeland et al., 2021). This was an actual in-person study that was done and 675 first year college students completed a full assessment of behavioral and emotional functioning at the beginning of the spring semester in 2020. Of the 600, 576 completed the same assessment at the end of the spring semester, 600 completes a 1 item from COVID-related survey after the onset of the pandemic, and 485 completed nightly surveys of mood and wellness behaviors on a regular basis before and after the onset of the COVID crisis (Copeland et al., 2021). These results were able to tell us that external problems and attentions problems increased after the onset of COVID (Copeland et al., 2021). Students that were included within the wellness program were less affected during COVID-19 in terms of internalizing symptoms and attention problems (Copeland et al., 2021). The nightly surveys of mood and daily wellness were negatively affected by the COVID – 19 viruses (Copeland et al., 2021). Overall, this study expresses that COVID – 19 has affected college students' attention, external and internal factors, mood, and daily wellness all negatively.

Conclusion

This research can give a lot of different contributions to the mental health community. Counselors, therapists, and psychiatrists are struggling with being able to handle the increase in anxiety within college students due to the pandemic. As shown from the literature there are multiple different factors that play into a college student's mental health before, during, and after the pandemic. Before the pandemic the main factors were academics, social life, and other personal factors both internal and external. All of these factors lead to anxiety levels. During the pandemic the world has changed drastically. Isolation, relocation, academics, relocation, and personal factors. All of the above are factors that affect college students' mental health during the pandemic. A lot of people developed COVID-19 grief which results in loneliness and anxiety. Relocation caused a lot of worry, and online classes caused a lot of uncertainty for students. During the pandemic the mental health community started seeing many more cases for anxiety during the pandemic leaving a lot of uncertainty on how to treat the increase of cases.

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METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

Based on findings and patterns that are identified in the literature review, as well as the future research suggestions that the researcher has found within existing mental health literature, my project will focus on answering the following research questions:

- I. How have anxiety levels changed from learning online to being back in person?
- II. Has the college student's anxiety increased, stayed the same, or decreased with coming back to in person classes after the pandemic?
- III. During quarantine were there other factors that played a role into the college students' anxiety levels other than academics and the pandemic restrictions?

During this Honors Thesis the investigation that will be conducted will examine anxiety within college students looking at both during the pandemic in an online learning environment and after the pandemic while back in an in-person learning environment. The research question for this thesis is, how have college students' anxiety levels changed from during the pandemic in an online learning environment to after the pandemic in an in-person learning environment?

The goal of this Honors Thesis is to see that if college students' anxiety levels have decreased, increased, or stayed the same from during the pandemic being in an online learning environment to after the pandemic being back in an in-person learning environment. The objective of this Honors Thesis is to see the difference between college students' mental health from being in a pandemic when their lives changed very quickly to after the pandemic getting back to what is considered a "normal" college life. My hypothesis is that college students' anxiety levels will either stay the same from during the pandemic to after or they will increase because they are getting used to being back in an in-person learning environment because of academics, school, and personal factors.

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This Honors thesis scope and focus is specifically on college students and their anxiety levels. The researcher will be able to compare them from during the pandemic and being on zoom and isolation to them back in the “normal” classroom environment outside of isolation. The main focus is on their mental health and how it has changed from during the pandemic to after the pandemic.

This work is related to existing research because there have been studies that have examined college students’ mental health and academics and how their mental health has been amplified to a higher level because of being in college. There has also been research on the pandemic and how the pandemic has affected mental health throughout the entire population due to multiple factors. The research that will be conducted will be able to benefit the overall psychology field. There has not been a lot of research on college students’ mental health during or after the pandemic. This research will be able to add information to the psychology field and see how mental health has changed after the pandemic. The research will be able to help mental health professionals and see what college students still need help in regarding mental health issues and see if they need more help than before. This research will also be able to help colleges and universities because they can then implement different strategies to help reduce student anxiety levels by providing additional resources for them. This thesis is worth doing in order to help college students now and the ones that come after the research. It is not only current college students that will be affected by the next four years of college students, because they were all affected during their high school years as well. Therefore, this thesis will be able to help generations of students to come but will also include the current generation of college students. This research will not affect anyone else but college students, the psychology field, and mental health professionals, but this research is important in order to further the psychology field and make it better than it was before.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data were collected using an online survey distributed to Bryant University students and potentially other college students within the state of Rhode Island. The survey was distributed through email and text messages. The survey began by asking respondents a number of questions pertaining to their demographics. They were then asked to respond to a series of questions that will help assess their anxiety levels about their mental state and their academics during the pandemic and after the pandemic. The examiner implemented the order effect into the survey to ensure that not all the participants receive the questions in the same order. The survey was conducted through Qualtrics, a commonly used survey platform for collecting quantitative and qualitative data through Bryant University.

Once the collection of at least 100 responses is completed, the data was reviewed and cleaned to make sure that any missing observations are addresses, and that it can be implemented into an appropriate form of analysis, such as different types of graphs. This will allow for the comparison between college students' mental health during the different time periods and allow for us to see where college students are struggling the most mentally. Bar graphs can be used as a statistical analysis which can assist in providing a total number and or percentage of the students in a specific category or group which can provide a layout of where the different groups stand in regard to their anxiety levels. Conclusions relating to the different mental health status in college students are the most important to the mental health professionals which can be found based on the results of the analysis, and general recommendations can be made.

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POTENTIAL RESEARCH ISSUES AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

A potential point of concern for the research project was how representative the Bryant University community, which was the anticipated sample group, would be truthful about their mental health states during the specific time periods. Bryant University was the ideal sample group without having to go to other colleges, but the concern was that the researcher would not be able to get 100 people from the community to fill out the survey. Stigma and bias stemming from mental health were something to be acknowledged or addressed by giving them a proper definition of each mental health disorder in order to receive more accurate surveys from the audience.

The rights, privacy, and confidentiality of the participants were strictly maintained at all times. There was respect for each respondent that chose to participate within the study, including their autonomy, which meant that each respondent had to take the survey voluntarily. The survey also had to be free from any coercion or undue influence, and the respondents' rights, dignity, and autonomy were respected and appropriately protected. The research was beneficence and non-maleficence, meaning the research provided value that overall outweighed any risks or harm. There was only benefit from performing this research with no potential risk or harm to the participants and researcher.

There was fairness provided within the study as well. The research was conducted between one group within society, such as college students. Each participant was given the same survey, which further provided respect for each participant within the study. There should not have been any injustice within the research study. Each participant was also given informed consent, which meant each participant was informed about the research in an understanding manner without duress. As a volunteer, the participants made their own decision without duress or another influence. Each volunteer also received confidentiality and integrity throughout this research project. The project was proposed to Bryant University's Institutional Review Board using the number #2023-1016 in order to receive any and all necessary approval.

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THESIS PROJECT PLAN

Date	Task/ Deliverable
June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receiving feedback from the Bryant Honors council on thesis proposal submitted for end of Fall 2023 semester• Sharing proposal feedback via email with faculty advisor, Professor Deluga• Sharing proposal feedback via editorial reviewer, TBD• Continue brainstorming survey questions. Keep a shared list with Professor Deluga
July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two zoom meetings with faculty advisor (dates are TBD)• Construction of survey with full list of questions to be submitted to the Bryant IRB at the beginning of the Fall 2023 Semester (to be completed by August 28th)• Continued communication with Professor Deluga via email regarding survey building and update to literature review or methodology
August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resume zoom meetings with Professor Deluga to determine methods of survey distribution• Planning for work to be done throughout the Fall semester of 2023
September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit survey to the Bryant IRB by Friday, September 8th• Plan to discuss beginning of survey data analysis during the first or second week of school• Resume in person meetings with Professor Deluga to discuss feedback from IRB and the incoming results of the survey and project matters• Meet with Professor Deluga to determine any adjustments to written

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	<p>portions of the project that should be made before the final submission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing Data analysis and any necessary updates to the literature review and methodology sections • Continued email communication with faculty advisor and editorial reviewer • Goal of beginning survey distribution to the Bryant Community and other college in Rhode Island by the first week of October 2023 • Check-in meeting with editorial reviewer to determine any adjustments to written portions of the project that should be made before December • Submitting intent to complete the final thesis to academic advisor, Kristen Pidgeon, by September 30th
October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on written report of survey findings and analysis • Planning faculty advisor meetings for October 6th and 20th • Planning meeting with personal librarian, Heather-Lee Byrne on October 19th
November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting together all components of the final thesis project • Reviewing all sections of project with my advisor and editorial reviewer to ensure they accurately reflect the goals of the project • Create the final thesis project PowerPoint slides • Practice presentations with the honors program at the end of the month
December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of thesis in mid-December • Final submission of thesis project to the Honors Program

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RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

There were a total of 192 respondents to the survey. Of the 192 responses only 134 of the participants completed the survey in its entirety. Therefore, the results will be based on the 134 complete surveys.

Please identify your sex

Located in the appendix you will see a bar graph representing the sex of the participants. The options were male, female, non-binary, transgender, and other. 61 of the participants or 46% of the participants were males. 73 of the participants or 54% of them were females. All this represents is that more females answered this survey than males, but the percentages and responses are close to each other. Appendix A is able to show this in a visual perspective of a bar graph.

Please identify your age group

Colleges and Universities are filled with a lot of different aged students. I chose to focus on three age ranges which are 17 to 19, 20 to 23, and 23 to 25 years old. The rationale behind the groupings include freshman, other students, and then any students who are doing fifth year. Most of the participants that answered the survey are between the ages of 20 and 23, which make up 63% makeup of the total with 84 participants. 17 to 19 age range contributed to 35% of the makeup ending with 47 responses. Lastly, 23- to 25-year-olds contributed 2% of the total and 3 participants. Appendix B is able to show this in a visual graph.

Please identify your current year

Based on the age group it makes sense that most of the participants that contributed to filling out the survey are seniors at Bryant University. Half of the participants are seniors with 67 participants. The next largest group that participated were sophomores with 31 participants or 23%. The freshman class had 19 participants or 14% and Juniors had 17 participants or 13% of the total. See Appendix C for results.

Do you have a job or are you currently working

Out of 134 participants 41% of the participants or 55 participants do not have a job or are not currently working. Whereas 59% of the participants do have a job and or are currently working. Out of the participants that have a job, 41% of them or 55 participants have a job on

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campus and the other 18% or 24 participants have a job off campus. Appendix D shows the comparison of the students and their jobs.

What is your ethnicity

There are a lot of different ethnicities on Bryant University's campus. Throughout this survey I tried to include as many as I could, but if I did not include it, I left another section for people to fill out as well. Eighty – six percent choose that they are white or Caucasian. Seven percent said that they are Hispanic and another 7% said that they are Asian or Pacific Islander. Six percent said they are black or African American, with 1% being American Indian and Alaskan native. Two percent choose the other section. When looking at the answers for the other section it has become clear that 1 person choose every single ethnicity leaving the other section blank, 1 person left it blank, and 1 person wrote Jewish.

Rate your anxiety level during this time based on the definition provided: Anxiety is feeling fear, dread, and/ or uneasiness

This question was to see the participants anxiety at that moment in time. The average participant answer for this question was 2.83. On the sliding scale meant that most of the participants rarely feel anxiety but are leaning more towards sometimes having anxiety. The maximum answer was 5 meaning they have anxiety all the time, and the minimum answer was 1 meaning that they never feel anxiety.

Anxiety is feeling fear, dread, and/or uneasiness. How often did you feel anxiety during 2020 – 2022 during COVID while being in an online learning environment?

This is the first survey question that brings in the actual aspect of the thesis. Unfortunately, only 125 participants answered this section, but for the rest 134 participants completed them. This question I used a sliding scale between 1 and 5. 1 represented never feeling anxiety, 2 represented rarely feeling anxiety, 3 represented sometimes having anxiety, 4 represented often feeling anxiety, and 5 represented feeling anxiety all the time. The average response of all the participants was 2.73. This means they rarely felt anxiety but are leaning towards sometimes having anxiety. The minimum was 1 which means these participants never felt anxiety during this time. The maximum was recorded at 5 which means they felt anxiety all the time.

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Please check all the reasons of your anxiety from the list provided for during COVID

This question was also a slider question that asked them to rate their anxiety based on a situation from 1 to 5. The highest average of all the participants included worrying about their loved ones, change in social life, and social distancing and isolation. After the top three academics then came into play with school specifically adding additional anxiety, uncertainties with exams, tests, and quizzes, and missing important experiences from college closures. See Appendix E for the full chart results.

Anxiety is feeling fear, dread, and/ or uneasiness. Do you feel any anxiety being back in an in – person learning environment

The average answer for all participants was 2.36 on the sliding scale. Which means that they rarely feel any anxiety and are not leaning in any other direction. The maximum answer was 5 meaning they have anxiety all the time, and the minimum answer was 1 meaning that they never feel anxiety. Comparing this to during COVID it is clear that Bryant University students experienced more anxiety during COVID in an online learning environment.

Please check all the reasons of your anxiety from the list provided doe being back in – person

This question was also a slider question that asked them to rate their anxiety based on a situation from 1 to 5. The highest average of all the participants included uncertainties with exams, tests, and quizzes, change in social life, and a sense of belonging. Looking at the average rates between an online learning environment and an in – person learning environment, these averages are lower than during COVID. In this case, one situation regarding academics was in the top three as well. The next three include worrying about their loved ones, financial strain, and missing important experiences from college closures. See Appendix F for the full chart results.

Does being back in an in- person learning environment add additional anxiety than being online?

The average answer for all of the participants was 2.18 which means that they rarely feel anxiety. Therefore, being back in an in – person learning environment does not influence the participants anxiety levels. The maximum answer was 5 meaning they have anxiety all the time, and the minimum answer was 1 meaning that they never feel anxiety.

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Rate your anxiety levels after being back in – person

The average answer for all of the participants resulted in 2.38 on the sliding scale. This results in the participants rarely feeling anxiety after they have been able to adjust to being back in – person. The maximum answer was 5 meaning they have anxiety all the time, and the minimum answer was 1 meaning that they never feel anxiety.

Do you feel more anxiety in – person or online

This question also used the sliding scale but with a different meaning than the rest. 1 represented never feeling anxiety online or in – person. 2 represented online, 3 represented neutral, and 4 represented in – person. Lastly, 5 represented having anxiety all the time which means both in person and online. The average response for all of the participants resulted in 2.66. Meaning that more participants felt anxiety while they were in an online learning environment than in – person.

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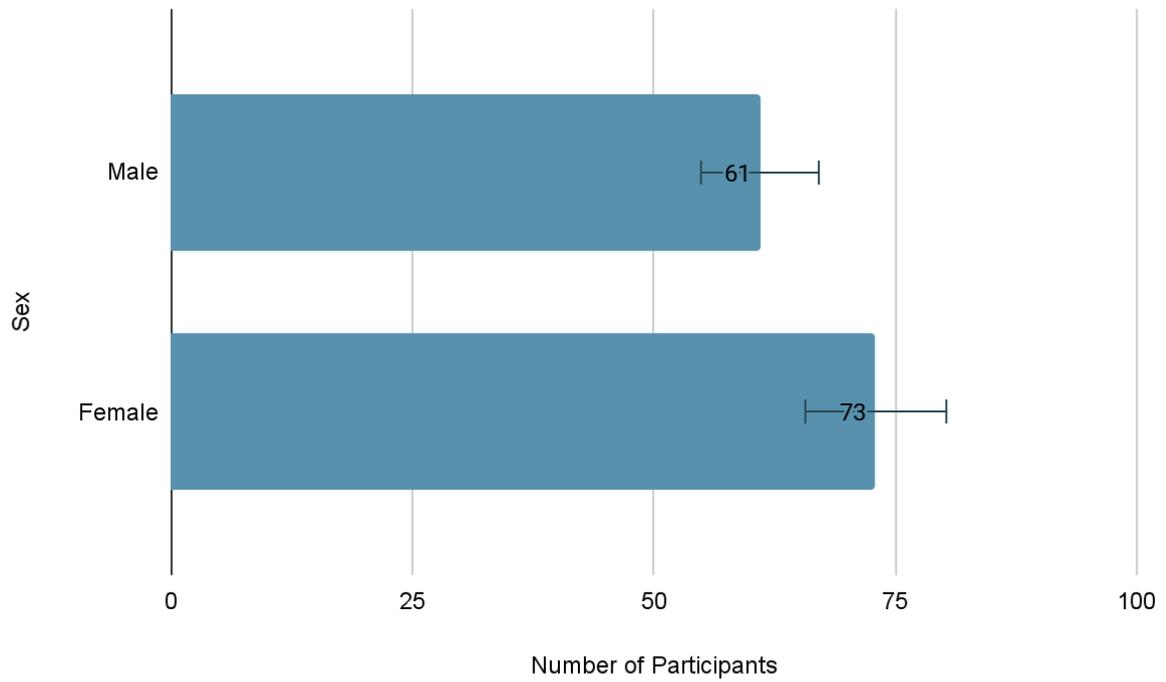
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, anxiety levels have changed with students from when they were in an online learning environment to an in – person learning environment. While the students were online their anxiety levels were focused on the COVID restrictions compared to being back in – person when they slightly shifted to worrying about school and their exams. During COVID their anxiety level was 2.73 on the sliding scale compared to 2.36 being back in – person. Therefore, the college student’s anxiety decreased with coming back to in – person classes after the pandemic. Based on the results from my survey there were not any other factors that played into their anxiety levels during COVID that was not academic and or pandemic restrictions related.

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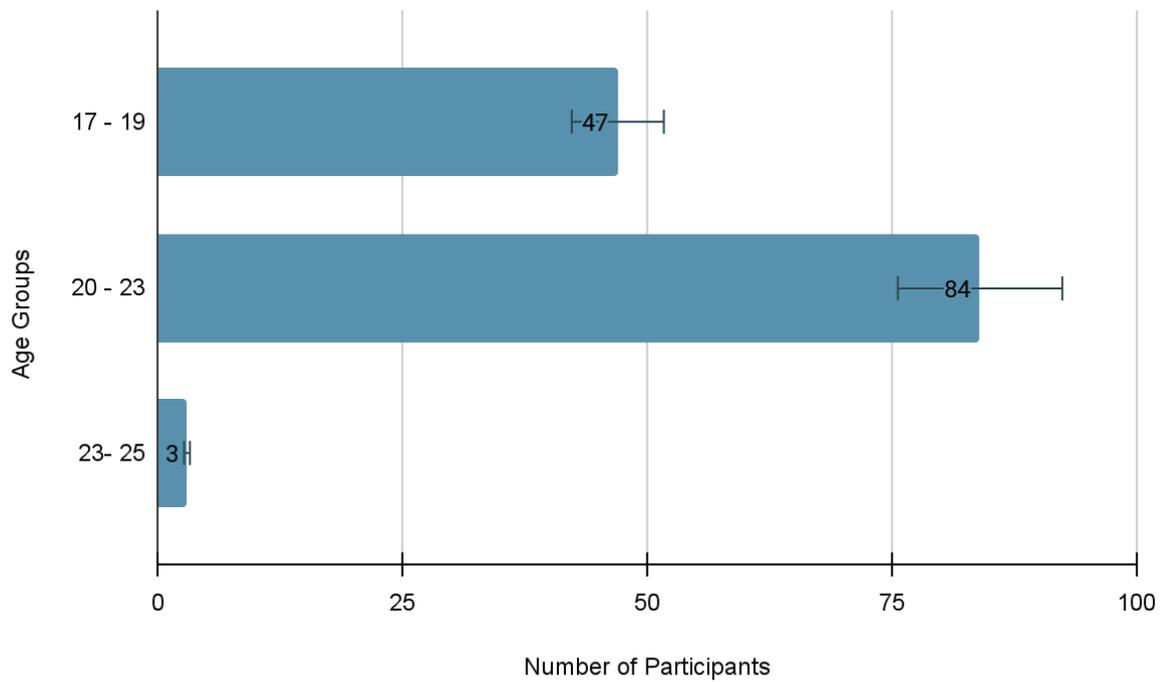
APPENDICES

Appendix A – Graph of sex



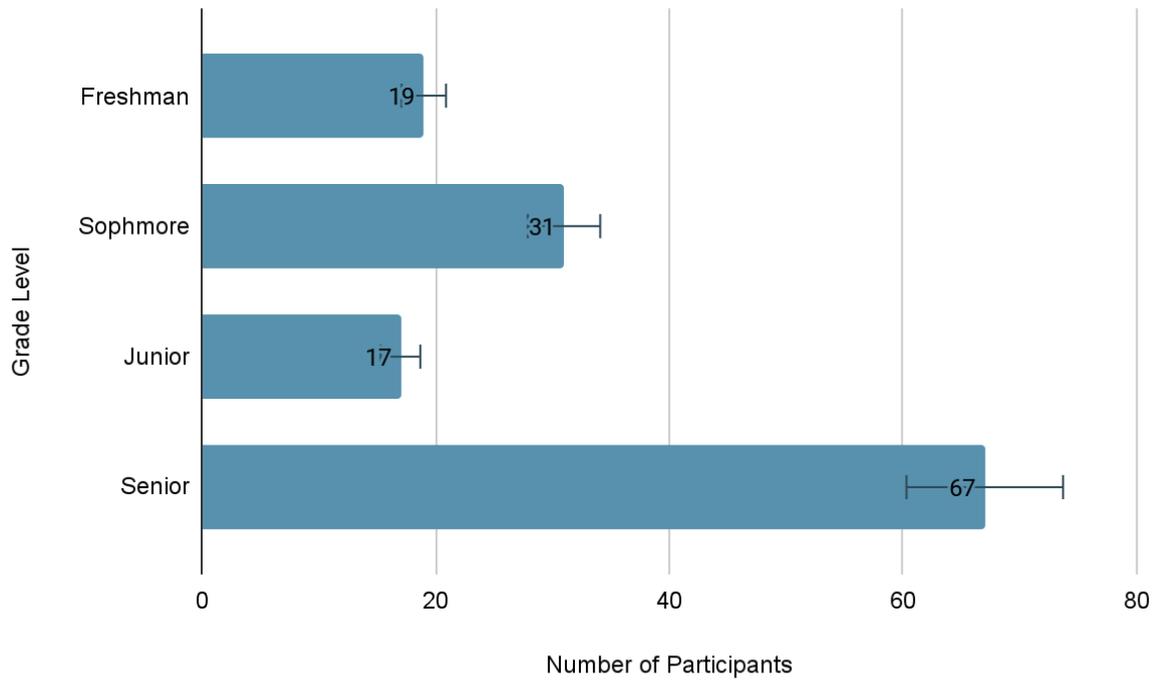
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Appendix B – Graph of age



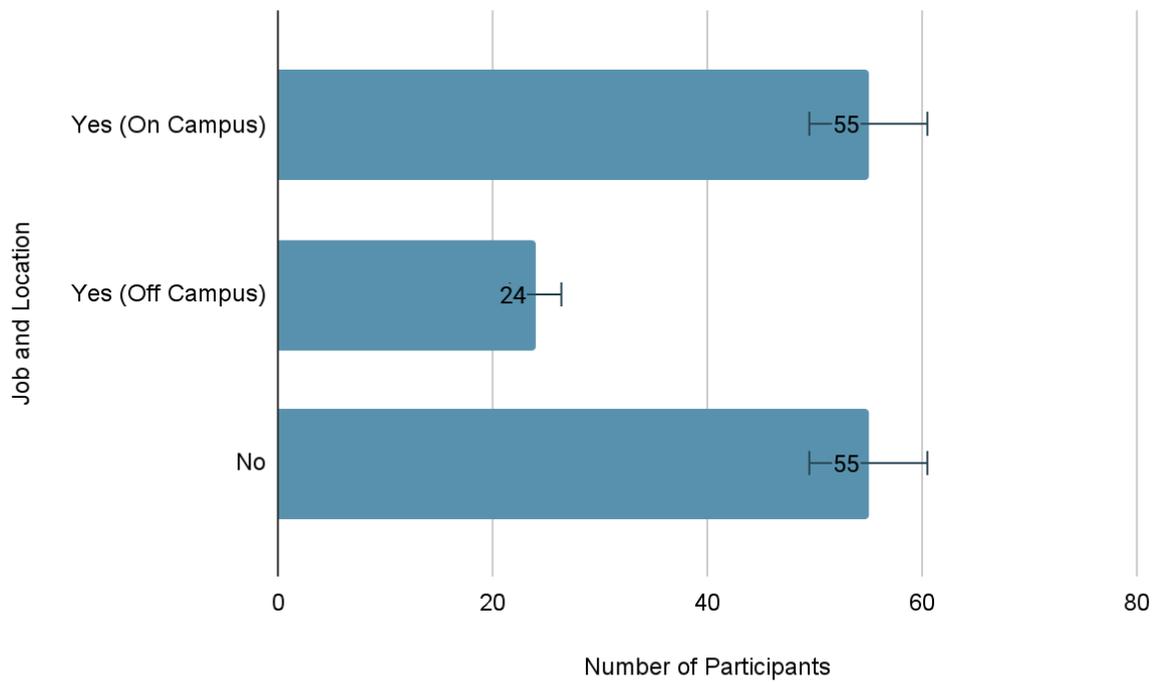
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Appendix C – Graph of year



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Appendix D – Graph of job



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Appendix E – Full chart results for anxiety during COVID and online

Please check all the reasons of your anxiety from the list provided:	Average
Change in physical health:	2.10
Did school specifically add additional anxiety:	2.58
Social distancing and isolation:	2.68
Worrying about your loved ones:	2.71
Sense of belonging:	2.20
Discrimination:	1.40
Financial Strain:	1.81
Caretaker burden:	1.42
Missing important experiences from college closures:	2.40
Uncertainties with exams, tests, and quizzes:	2.42

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Appendix F – Full chart results for anxiety post COVID and in – person

Please check all the reasons of your anxiety right now from the list provid...	Average
Change in social life:	2.40
Change in physical health:	1.82
Social distancing and isolation:	1.62
Worrying about your loved ones:	2.28
Sense of belonging:	2.33
Discrimination:	1.40
Financial Strain:	2.09
Caretaker burden:	1.34
Missing important experiences from college closures:	1.88
Uncertainties with exams, tests, and quizzes:	2.69

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