



10th
European Conference
on Mental Health



Current impact of COVID-19 on mental health and wellbeing - young adults' perspective

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Introduction

COVID-19 IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUTH

The European Commission referred to the “ The COVID GENERATION” highlight an increase of 25% in the number of mental illness problems in adolescents and young people, related to COVID-19 and associated lockdown measures.¹

1 - Dekker W. (2022). The Covid generation: the effects of the pandemic on youth mental health, European Commission , Horizon The EU Research and Innovation Magazine.



Introduction

COVID-19 IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUTH

A critical review of longitudinal studies about the impact of COVID-19 on youth mental health points out the increase in¹:

- externalized disorders
- suicide ideation and attempts
- frequency and problematic use of substances in some higher-risk youth
- disordered eating symptomatology

1 - Chadi, N., Ryan, N. C., & Geoffroy, M.-C.. (2022). COVID-19 and the impacts on youth mental health: emerging evidence from longitudinal studies. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 113(1), 44–52.



Introduction

LIMITATIONS TO OVERCOME

- Most studies on COVID-19 impact on mental health focuses on clinical signs/symptoms, using pre-existing questionnaires.
- Few studies focus on lived experiences of young adults during COVID-19
- Many projects use mixed samples of adolescents and young adults
- The focus of previous literature is on the negative impact of COVID-19. Positive effects are overlooked.



Aims

- To understand how young adults perceive short and long-term consequences (positive and negative) of the pandemic on their mental health and psychological well-being
- To relate the individual characteristics relevant to psychological adaptation to the pandemic with positive and negative perceptions of pandemic consequences



Methods

STEP 1 – Qualitative methodology

Focus groups and literature review

- 4 online focus groups: a total of 22 participants; 16 women; 14 workers; age: [20;35]
- Themes



- Content analysis was conducted using thematic analysis



Methods

Step 2 – Questionnaire

- **Perceptions**
 - Of present personal negative effects of the pandemic – 23 items
 - Of present personal positive effects of the pandemic – 14 items
- **Individual characteristics** related to psychological adaptation to pandemic (psychological | social) – 36 items

Answers in a 4 point Likert scale



Methods

Step 2 – Questionnaire

- Questionnaire validation
 - Delphi Method – panel of 6 experts
 - Pre-test with 20 young adults (10 students; 10 workers)
- Data was collected between 23 May and 15 June 2022



Methods

SAMPLE

Recruitment: email, Facebook, Instagram

Convenience sample of 246 young Portuguese adults

72,4% women

Mean age = 22,94±4.05 [18-35]

Occupation: 67,9% students, 30,1% workers; 2% unemployed



Methods

Data analysis

SPSS statistical software (v27.0)

5% significance level

Normality test – Shapiro-Wilk

Identification of Components of individual characteristics

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with orthogonal rotation by Varimax method (with Kaiser Normalization)

Eigenvalues considered - greater than 1; Items with factor loading greater than 0.40

PCA suitability (KMO statistic) = 0.827, (good suitability) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Extracted commonalities (h^2) were used

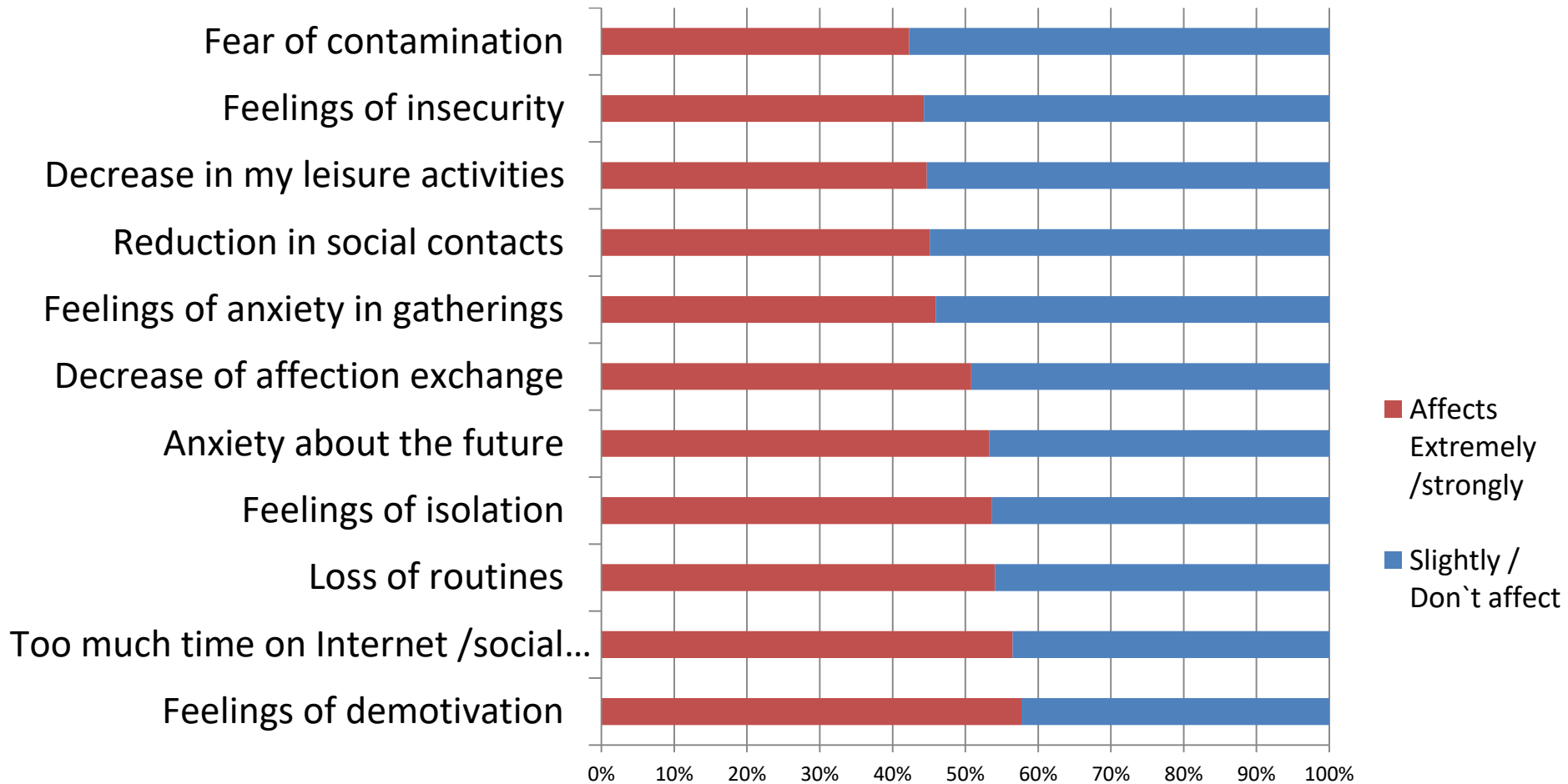
Correlations between personal characteristics and perception of positive and negative impact - Spearman test

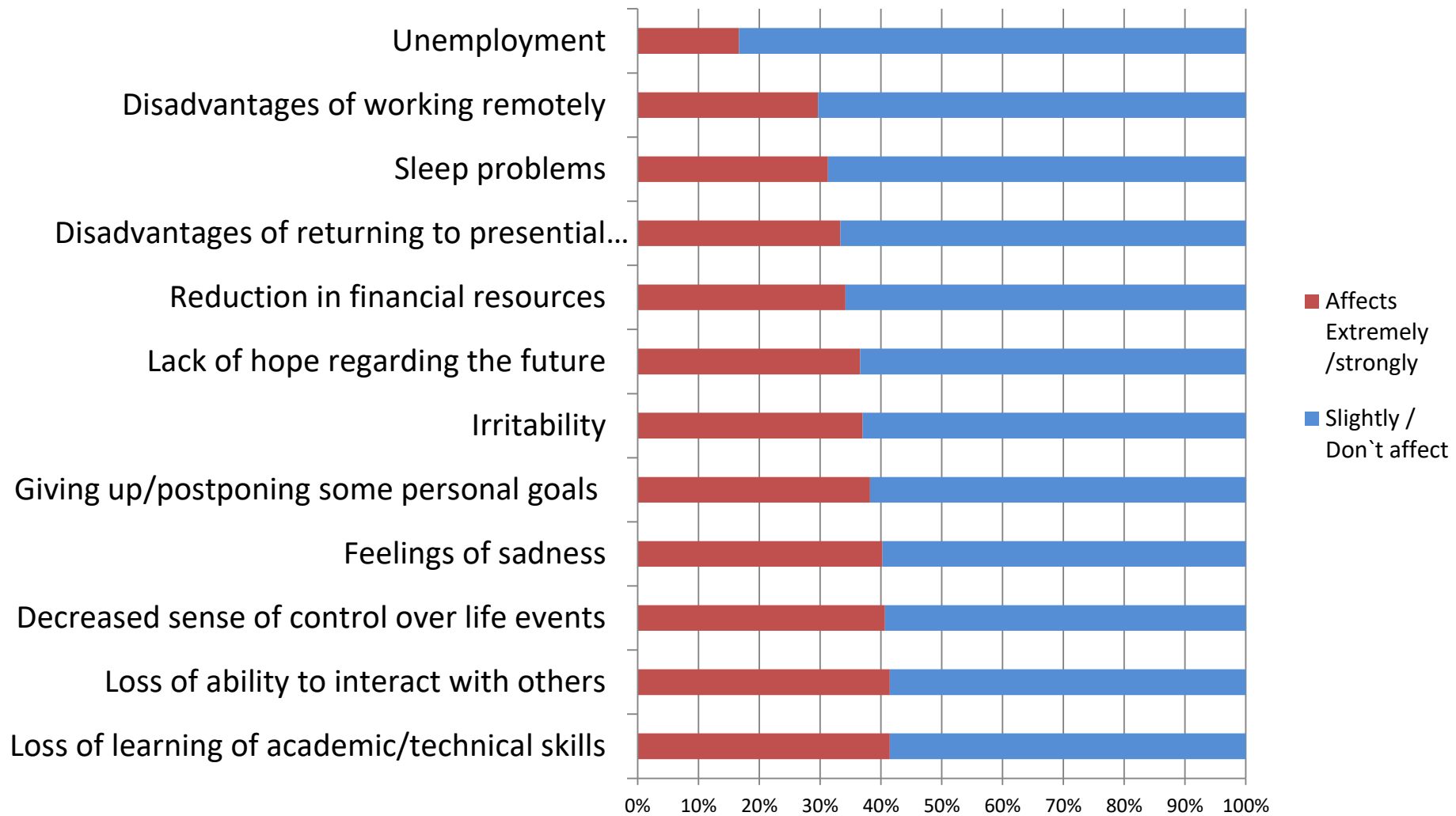


Results

PERCEPTION OF NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF PANDEMIC

“In what way do these negative consequences of the pandemic affect you”



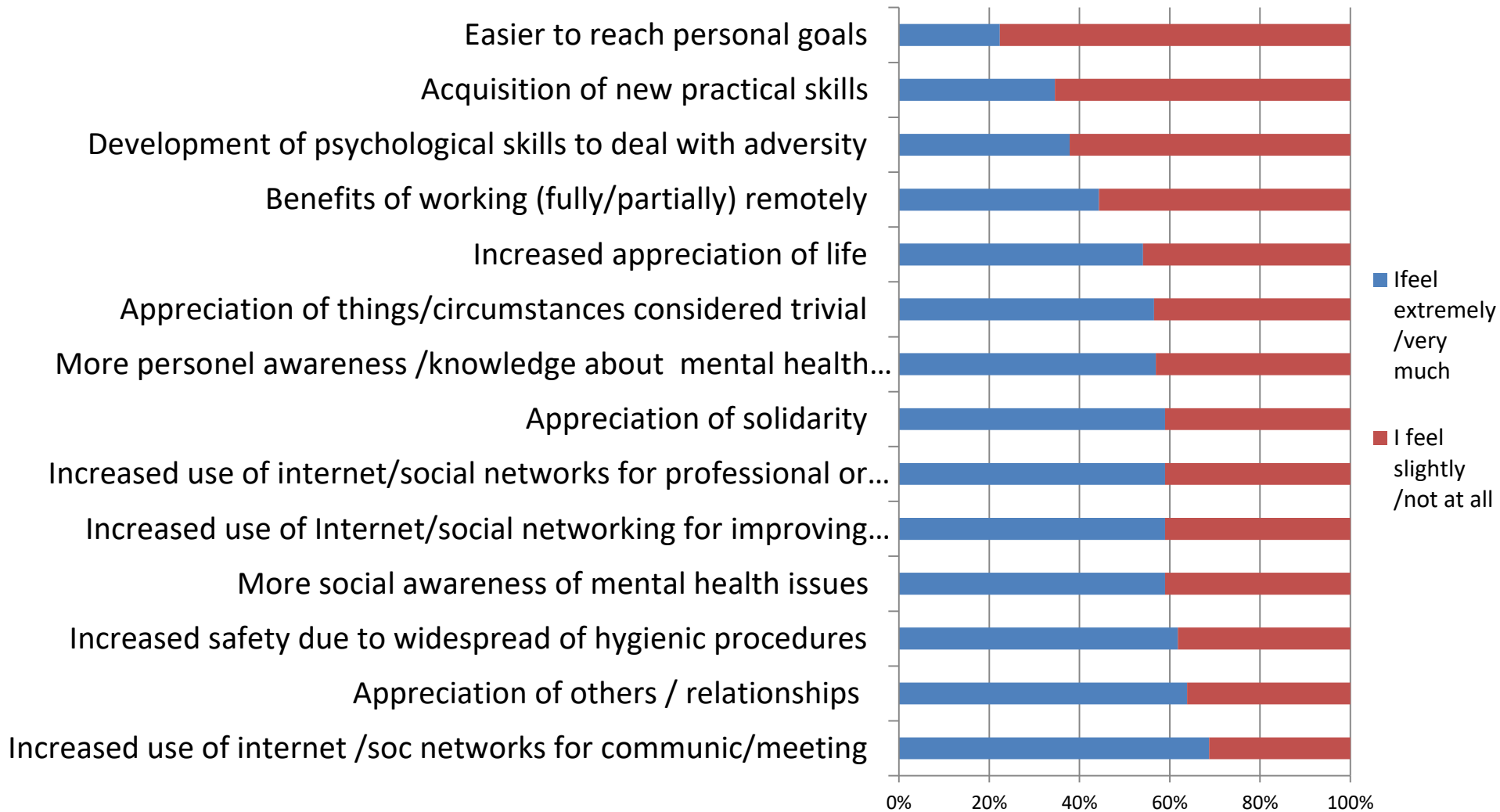




Results

PERCEPTION OF POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES OF PANDEMIC

“In what way do you feel these positive effects of the pandemic”





Results

- The perception of the present negative effects of COVID 19 is higher than the perception of positive effects

	Match statistics		t Statistics		
	mean	sd	t	g.l.	p
Global Score positive effects	56,3113	14,77	-5,426	245	0,000
Global Score negative effects	62,9065	16,66			



Results

Individual characteristics related to psychological adaptation to pandemic - Components analysis

Negative emotions $\alpha = 0,861$

I'm a confident person

I Use too much social media

Difficulty in sharing emotions

I seldom feel anxiety

I feel depressed

I seldom have feelings of loneliness

I have many fears

Resilience and social support $\alpha = 0,757$

I like to meet other people

I have a full social life

I cope well with stress

I have support from my friends

I'm a optimistic



Results

**Risk
Perception**
 $\alpha = 0,533$

I am afraid of being infected
(COVID 19)

I disapprove of people who have
risk behaviors related to the
pandemic

**Perceptions
about
information**
 $\alpha = 0,757$

I believe in information
provided by health specialists

I doubt the information about
COVID-19

I lack information about the
issues related to COVID-19

**Coping skills
(lockdown)**

$\alpha = 0,140$

I am a person who finds it easy
to stay active

I like to work from home



Results

	Perception of positive effects of the pandemic	Perception of negative effects of the pandemic
Negative emotions	0,053	,519 ^{**}
Resilience and social support	,285 ^{**}	-,160 [*]
Perceptions about information	-,167 ^{**}	0,025
Risk perception	0,098	,238 ^{**}
Coping skills (lockdown)	0,034	-,132 [*]

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



Discussion

Although young adults have a stronger perception of adverse effects of the pandemic, they also feel some positive effects.

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF COVID-19

- The perception of the negative emotional effects of the pandemic is strong; Demotivation, isolation, anxiety and insecurity were the most mentioned.
- Though the reduction of social contacts affected half of the sample, the limitations in the exchange of affection and feelings of isolation had a stronger negative impact. Further research is needed to identify the relevant implications of presential interaction restraints.



Discussion

POSITIVE IMPACT OF COVID-19

- Changing the way young adults see events and relevant others was one of the most strong positive effects of COVID-19:
 - Appreciation of others/relationships
 - Social awareness of mental health issues
 - Solidarity
 - Increased appreciation of things/circumstances considered trivial and of life
- Most young adults did not perceive that the pandemic led to the acquisition of practical and psychological skills to cope with adversity.



Discussion

NOT EVERYTHING IS BLACK AND WHITE

- Some young adults feel the disadvantages of working remotely, but the disadvantages of returning to presential work are also referred.
- Spending too much time on Internet/social networks is perceived as a problem, but the use of these media is seen as positive when used to enhance communication, improve learning and develop professional /study activities.



Discussion

PRESENT AND FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

Interventions in current and future similar pandemic situations should address strategies to:

- Cope with negative emotions
- Reduce negative perceptions about disease information
- Promote social support (friends)
- Promote coping skills for lockdown



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