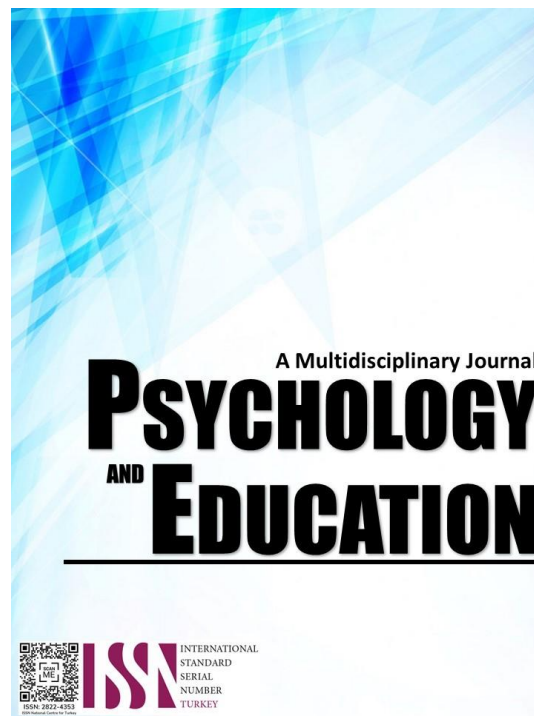


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College Students' Experiences on Prolonged Social Deprivation and Their Coping Mechanisms in the Midst of Community Quarantine

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Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak has forced the government to implement strict quarantine protocols in our country. As a result, social interaction has been limited especially among college students. Due to this fact, the researchers conducted this study to explore the personal experiences of college students of University of Saint Louis Tuguegarao on prolonged social deprivation, and to determine the different coping mechanisms they employed during the pandemic. A qualitative research design was utilized in the current study which employed Phenomenological Interpretative Research. Through purposive sampling, a total of 20 college students from different programs and departments participated in this study. The data were gathered by engaging in an online interview with the use of open-ended questions. The results revealed seven (7) major recurring themes when it comes to the experiences of the students with prolonged social deprivation which include: (1) Academic-Related Experiences; (2) Interpersonal-Related Experiences; (3) Personal-Related Experiences; (4) Anxiety-Related Symptoms; (5) Depressive Symptomatology; (6) Stress; and (7) Behavioral Improvement. Meanwhile, five (5) major themes for coping strategies were revealed by the students which include: (1) Recreational Activities and Use of Social Media; (2) Spiritual Related Activities; (3) Interpersonal-Related Activities; (4) Intrapersonal-Related Activities; and (5) Distraction Method. In conclusion, this study highlights that experiencing social deprivation in the midst of a pandemic can cause challenges and problems affecting the different aspects of the students' lives, which can be detrimental to their mental health and well-being. However, by employing different coping strategies, the students were able to maintain their well-being amidst the pandemic.

Keywords: *social deprivation, experiences, coping mechanisms, COVID-19, college students*

Introduction

Since the news about the coronavirus disease came out, multiple facets of the community are also profoundly affected. Economically, various industries (Nicola et al., 2020; Shohini, 2020) were incapacitated due to the closing of non-essential businesses, and the income of the majority of the public were either directly or indirectly affected due to economic frustrations and loss of employment (Hussain, Mirza & Hassan, 2020). In particular, educational workforce had been limited to different countries and distance or online learning has been declared as the new normal. This sudden change in platform caused the people, more specifically the students, to deal with the challenges that came with this drastic shift (di Pietro, Biagi, Costa, Karpinski & Mazza, 2020; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020; Onyema et al., 2020). With all these possible sources of stressors, the mental health of people becomes at risk as the pandemic continues (Wang et al., 2020), causing increase in the level of distress and prevalence of psychological disorders (Hussain, Mirza & Hassan, 2020; Xiong et al., 2020).

While there are many factors affecting the public's general well-being during the pandemic, still, the most evident is the psychological effects of prolonged social deprivation that the people have experienced during

this adversity. Currently, this study defines prolonged social deprivation as the lack of in-person social interaction with other people, such as family members, friends, and classmates for at least two (2) months and must be brought about by the implemented community quarantine protocols. Periods of limited or lack of in-person interaction, even less than 10 days, can have long-term implications, with psychological symptoms lasting up to 3 years (Brooks et al., 2020; Pietrabissa & Simpson, 2020). Moreover, studies of pandemics faced over time and the current coronavirus disease indicate that the psychological effects of contagion and quarantine are not limited to the fear of contracting the virus (Barbisch et al., 2015; Saladino, Algeri, & Auriemma, 2020). Rather, it is brought about by the experience of prolonged social deprivation. Moreover, experiencing social deprivation can cause various detrimental effects to the public's physical and psychological well-being (Barnes et al. 2004; Wilson et al. 2007; Santini et al., 2020).

Taking into consideration that the Philippines has the longest quarantine record and with ages 21 and below being subjected to adhere with the implemented stay-at-home protocols (Department Of Health, 2020), it can imply that college students are the ones who have most likely experienced prolonged social deprivation and the psychological effects that come with it. In fact,

socially isolated students rate daily activities as more "intensely stressful," passive response to coping, have more dysphoria, feel less associated with those around them, have poorer sleep performance (Cacioppo, et al., 2000; Cacioppo & Hawkey, 2003; Ray, et al., 2010). They also showed greater psychological distress and more depressive, anxiety and stress symptoms (Wang et al., 2020; Tee et al., 2020). In addition, when faced with public health crises, the mental health of college students is greatly impaired when experiencing prolonged social deprivation, and they require attention, assistance, and support from society, families, and schools (Cao et al., 2020). Hence, this would also imply their need for higher level of resilience and healthier coping mechanisms, in order to adapt and bounce back from the negative effects of being socially isolated. Currently, this study defines coping mechanisms as strategies utilized by the college students as a way to compensate for the lack of in-person social interaction brought by the pandemic. Despite the fact that they are expected to be at a developmental stage where they can easily cope with the demands of a complex, global, technological, rapidly evolving environment with their thinking abilities, relationship skills, and ability to control emotions (Simpson, 2018), not all young adults have the ability to cope easily with this type of environment, particularly in this time of pandemic where all ages struggle with their everyday lives since everyone is expected to strictly follow the health protocols.

At present, there is inadequate number of studies with regard to the college students' experiences with prolonged social deprivation. More specifically, majority of findings on this matter involves students of foreign countries, proving that the researches which explore the experiences of Filipino college students with prolonged social deprivation are also limited despite experiencing lack of in-person social interaction for a long period of time. Lastly, although there have been various studies on coping strategies of college students during the COVID-19 pandemic, majority of it involves students from other countries. Considering the difference in cultural, economic, and environmental aspects of living, it is important to explore this matter in the context of Filipino college students. Therefore, to address these gaps, this study attempts to explore the experiences of Filipino college students with prolonged social deprivation and their coping mechanisms in the midst of community quarantine.

Research Objectives

The aim of the present study is to get an in-depth

analysis on the experiences of college students on prolonged social deprivation and their coping mechanisms in the midst of community quarantine. Specifically, this study was conducted:

1. to explore the personal experiences of college students on prolonged social deprivation; and
2. to determine the different coping mechanisms employed by the college students who are currently enrolled at the University of Saint Louis-Tuguegarao.

Literature Review

Pandemic and Social Deprivation

More than a year ago, the daily lives of people were put to halt and majority of the world did not have a choice but to adapt to a new normal way of living. All these were caused by the presence of the Coronavirus disease. More commonly known as COVID-19, it is an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus which was new and unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (World Health Organization, 2019). This pandemic has had a wide range of effect to the lives of the people. One of the major changes brought about by this pandemic is the limited social interaction and participation due to the quarantine protocols implemented to contain the spread of the disease. Such measures include temporarily closing down of public places that are non-essential to the people (e.g. park, tourist spots, and bars), prohibition on holding various social events in order to refrain gathering numerous people in one place (Pierce et al., 2020). Hence, a lot of individuals around the world have experienced a prolonged social deprivation during the majority of the course of the pandemic.

Social deprivation has been studied in the realm of social science and more specifically, within the discipline of Psychology. It has been considered as one of the central topics of the said discipline and has been provided with multiple meanings throughout the years (Masoom, 2016). In the past, social deprivation is defined as the absence of social interactions, contacts, and relationships with family and friends, with neighbors on an individual level (Berg, Cassells & Stokes, 1992 as cited by Menec, Newall, Mackenzie, Shoostari & Nowicki, 2020; Wu & Sheng, 2020). In addition, it was also described as the objective social environmental states as well as the interactional pattern of individual (Bosworth & Schaie, 1997 as cited by Hwang, Rabheru, Peisah, Reichman & Ikeda, 2020). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, social deprivation, along with loneliness, has already been

prevalent in certain areas of Europe, USA, and China (Leigh-Hunt et al., 2017; Xia and Li, 2018; Beridze et al., 2020; Wu, 2020). With the threat of acquiring a disease, the prevalence of social deprivation and loneliness might have possibly worsened for every country across the globe due to the limited social interactions and restrictions on our day-to-day activity.

The lack of proper and/or adequate social relations has been deemed as the root cause of social deprivation (Steptoe, Shankar, Demakakos and Wardle, 2013; Masoom, 2016). Given that we are in the midst of a pandemic, this has been more evident due to the introduction of a protocol where people of certain ages are imposed to stay at their respective homes until the spread of the virus is under control (Sepúlveda-Loyola et al., 2020). Moreover, in more extreme cases like a total isolation (a person is placed in a quarantine facility), it completely takes away the chances of having any in-person interaction with other individuals. Although it was a precautionary response carried out by the government, implementing community quarantine, lockdown, and stay-at-home protocols have placed a huge portion of our population vulnerable to experiencing social deprivation (Smith & Lim, 2020; Sepúlveda-Loyola et al., 2020; Hwang, Rabheru, Peisah, Reichman & Ikeda, 2020; Sheffler, Joiner and Sachs-Ericsson, 2020). This mandatory quarantine or isolation has been described as “unfamiliar and unpleasant” for it included the separation from our social circle, such as friends and to some extent, our families as well as a sudden disruption of our usual daily routines (Usher, Bhullar & Jackson, 2020 as cited by Kira et al., 2020). This, in turn, further aggravates the effects of a prolonged social deprivation to individuals.

Psychological Impacts of Prolonged Social Deprivation

Humans are social species. They are defined as beings that form organizations that extend beyond the individual. This implies that acquiring social interactions, as well as establishing social embeddedness, is a necessity in their lives (Cacioppo, Hawkey, Norman, & Berntson, 2011). Moreover, experiencing periods of social deprivation, even if it is only less than 10 days, can have long-term effects to the mental health of an individual (Brooks et al., 2020). Hence, the prolonged social deprivation brought about by the community quarantine protocols possesses a myriad of threat towards the general well-being of individuals (Smith, & Layton, 2010; Nitschke et al., 2020; Crittenden et al., 2014).

In line with the threats of social deprivation to our well-being, several researchers have found that relationship between these two variables exists. Indeed, it was proven that more time being socially isolated can contribute to the increase of mental and physical health problems (Holt & Lunstad, 2018; Pancani, Marinucci, Aureli & Riva, 2020, Bzdok & Dunbar, 2020). Moreover, physical distancing and social deprivation were also coupled with feelings of distress and uncertainty for many individuals which predict that the current situation will more likely lead to an increase in the level of anxiety in affected areas and population, but most especially in areas that implement lockdowns (Brooks et al., 2020; Rajkumar, 2020; Rubin & Wessely, 2020). In addition, symptoms of Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anger, avoidance, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, insomnia, digestive problems, as well as depressive symptoms were also associated with the experience of being socially isolated due to quarantine protocols (Motreff et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2020; Rogers et al., 2020). Alongside these effects, chronic levels of stress, prolonged feelings of distress, and worry can lead to sustained arousal and result in increased levels of fatigue and related somatic complaints (Cho et al., 2019; Nater, Maloney, Heim, & Reeves, 2011; Shevlin et al., 2020; Wyller, Eriksen, & Malterud, 2009). Moreover, a term was also created this year (2020) to depict one of the most common aftermaths of social deprivation – loneliness. A research by Shah, Nogueras, van Woerden & Kiparoglou (2020) coined the concept of “lockdown loneliness” which they defined as “loneliness resulting from social disconnection as a result of enforced social distancing and lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic”. These aftermaths of social deprivation have proven that the lack of proper and adequate social interaction during this adversity can take a huge toll on our general well-being.

One aspect of the community that has been adversely affected by prolonged social deprivation is the students. Specifically, college students have been subjects of various studies to look into their experiences on prolonged social deprivation due to closure of universities and its impacts to their psychological well-being (Lee, 2020; Moawad, 2020; Sahu, 2020; Zhai & Du, 2020). In many countries, including the Philippines, universities have taken drastic measures (e.g. community quarantine protocol) to help protect their students from this pandemic (Elmer, Mepham & Stadtfeld, 2020). While such measures were meant to help control the spread of the virus, there is no denying that this lead to social deprivation or the lack of in-person social interaction

of students (Shanahan et al., 2020; Galea et al. 2020; Lima et al., 2020; Fiorillo and Gorwood 2020) which in turn, has taken a huge impact on their mental health.

In particular, it was found out that social deprivation was one of the stress-inducing characteristics of the pandemic (Shanahan et al., 2020; Okruszek et al. 2020; Wang et al., 2020). The inadequate amount of in-person social interaction has made it harder for students to buffer the stress that they experienced during the course of the pandemic (Ellis, Dumas, & Forbes, 2020; Mosanya, 2020). Moreover, social networks and interaction of students has always been argued to play a protective role against academic stress which includes chasing deadlines and pressure to perform well (Elmer, Mephram & Stadtfeld, 2020; Stadtfeld, Vörös, Elmer, Boda & Raabe, 2018). However, with the prolonged social deprivation brought about by the pandemic, students will more likely experience the impact of this particular stressor towards their well-being. In addition, research also found that as students continue to experience prolonged social deprivation, there is an evident decrease in the face-to-face contact with lecturers and classmates, which eventually lead to an increase in their academic stress (Rogowska, Kuśnierz & Bokszczanin, 2020). On the other hand, high prevalence of anxiety and depression among college students who have experienced social deprivation during the COVID-19 was also reported (Xiao, 2020; Kmietowicz et al., 2020; Lima et al., 2020; Galea et al. 2020; Cao et al. 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Specifically, students who live alone had higher chances of developing anxiety than those who live with their parents (Cao et al., 2020; Tee et al., 2020). Moreover, university students have also experienced irregular sleep pattern and a poor sleep quality while in community quarantine (Cacioppo, et al., 2000; Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2003; Ray, et al., 2010; Marelli et al., 2020; Chen, Sun & Feng, 2020). This was explained due to the increase in electronic and digital usage as a way to cope with the social deprivation they are experiencing. On the other hand, loneliness have also increased among college students during the implementation of lockdowns and stay-at-home orders compared to older adults (Labrague, Santos & Falguera, 2020; Barreto et al., 2020; Bu et al., 2020; Rauschenberg et al., 2020), and with women more likely to experience it than men (Losada-Baltar et al., 2020; Salo et al., 2020). Tull et al. (2020) suggested that measures such as stay-at-home orders and community quarantine have contributed to a sense of loneliness among young people as they are being restricted from having an in-person social interaction with their peers. In addition, the closure of schools

may have possibly caused the increase of loneliness among students, as school routines and activities were considered as essential coping mechanisms for young people (Auger et al., 2020). Evidence also shows that even students without pre-existing mental health concerns also have higher probability of experiencing a decline in their mental health which coincided with the social deprivation that they have experienced (Hamza, Ewing, Heath & Goldstein, 2020).

These threats on the psychological well-being of the people, students in particular, caused by social deprivation create serious concern to the public. Moreover, given that the Philippines has experienced the longest community quarantine in the world, it would mean that the Filipino college students more likely have experienced a prolonged social deprivation which increases the chances that they have experienced the psychological impacts mentioned. Hence, there really is a need to explore their experiences as well as their resilience, specifically, how they cope with this adversity.

Psychological Resilience

For a few decades, various fields of studies have attempted and even succeeded in exploring the concept of resiliency. This concept has been the focal point of various studies and has been investigated in relation to extreme stress, trauma, and other chronic and uncontrollable conditions or events that many individuals experience throughout the course of their life (American Psychological Association, 2010; Eisenberg & Silver, 2011; Karam et al., 2014; Masten & Narayan, 2012; Tol, Song, & Jordans, 2013). Although there is an evident concern on these serious adversities and the role that resiliency plays in these types of circumstance, the realm of research still continuously explores the topic of resiliency itself – from its definition, construct, process, and even as a function . It might be a concept that has been investigated throughout the years but it still remains relevant, most especially during this time where we are in the midst of an adversity – the COVID-19. There is grief for those who have lost their loved ones and a strong feeling of fear for what is currently happening. But most certainly, there is an undeniable sense of uncertainty due to the abrupt changes that took place in our lives such as being in a prolonged social deprivation which caused majority of the people to receive inadequate amount of social interaction.

Prolonged Social Deprivation and Resilience

Social relationship and support are vital in cultivating

resilience towards distress but more importantly, psychopathology (Glass et al., 2009; Southwick et al., 2016; Labrague and Santos, 2020; Kılınc and Sis Çelik, 2020). As such, it has been found that acquiring social relationship and interaction can increase an individual's resilience (Sippel, Pietrzak, Charney, Mayes & Southwick, 2015; Zaki & Williams, 2013) and on the contrary, being socially disconnected was also believed to have negative effects to an individual's well-being (Nitschke et al., 2020; Crittenden et al., 2014). With the presence of a pandemic, it was reported that the average resiliency in USA is relatively lower than previously published norms (Killgore, Taylor, Cloonan & Dailey, 2020). In addition, people experiencing high level of stress were also found to rely on social connections to blunt the impact of witnessing trauma. For instance, support from friends was found to be the most important factor in the process of recovery after a loss (Greeff, Vansteenkeweg, & Herbiest, 2011; Cao, Yang and Wang, 2018). Meanwhile, disaster social support, either in the form of a tangible aid or simply an emotional connection, was found to be essential for people affected by events such as 9/11 and other natural disasters such as flooding (MacGeorge, 2004; Cherry et al., 2014; Guilaran, de Terte, Kaniasty and Stephens, 2018). These yielded results can lead to two implications: First is the established fact that social interaction and relationship has a vital role in increasing the chances of positive adaptation. On the other hand, it implies that social deprivation, especially a prolonged one, can also serve as a factor that contributes to the decrease in the level of resiliency of the people.

Coping Mechanisms in the Midst of Community Quarantine

It has already been mentioned in this review that social relationships and interaction serves as a protective factor against stress or any adversity (Sippel, Pietrzak, Charney, Mayes & Southwick, 2015; Zaki & Williams, 2013). Particularly, social interaction has been considered vital in buffering the stress (e.g. academic stress) that students experience (Elmer, Mepham & Stadtfeld, 2020; Stadtfeld, Vörös, Elmer, Boda & Raabe, 2018). However, with the lack of in-person social interaction being experienced by the general public, they are expected to lean towards other ways of coping with the effects of the pandemic, specifically, the prolonged social deprivation.

A study with US college students shows a divided response when it comes to their ability to cope with the pandemic-related stress that they are experiencing.

Some mentioned that they are able to cope adequately but on the other hand, a large portion of their student population said that they are still not able to cope with their current situation (Wang et al., 2020). On another study, seeking social support, engaging in distractions, and seeking professional help, were used more frequently as coping mechanisms (Shanahan et al., 2020). Consistent with this result, other studies have linked social support coming from family with lower level of loneliness and lessens anxiety experienced during the prolonged social deprivation (Labrague, Santos & Falguera, 2020; Cao et al. 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Scales et al., 2016; Ye et al., 2020). Interestingly, previous research has also revealed that institutional support is vital in the midst of a pandemic (Maunder et al., 2008; Mosanya, 2020). This, in turn, suggests that universities can aid in assisting students cope with the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic towards their psychological well-being. Additionally, on top of many difficulties, the pandemic has led to some more positive improvements in habits and mindsets, such as paying more attention to personal hygiene, taking care of one's own health (quitting smoking, consuming locally sourced organic food) and family, especially those in risk groups, spending more time doing sports, etc. (Pan, 2020; Elmer, Mepham, Stadtfeld, 2020; Renzo et al., 2020; Aristovnik, Keržič, Ravšelj, Tomažević, & Umek, 2020). Moreover, technologies (use of mobile applications, gaming, and internet) have also emerged as one of the coping mechanism styles of the students to compensate for the lack of in-person social interaction (Wang et al., 2020; Balhara, Kattula, Singh, Chukkali & Bhargava, 2020). Similarly, it was found out that during the extraordinary time of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining their social contacts through social media has helped others and themselves preserve their mental well-being (Cao et al., 2020; Ristovnik, Keržič, Ravšelj, Tomažević, & Umek, 2020). Another reported coping mechanism is engaging in health lifestyle activities such as exercise, diet maintenance, and self-care activities (Wang et al., 2020; Labrague, Santos & Falguera, 2020). Moreover, students who have reported experiencing anxiety due to social deprivation are also prone to using emotional-oriented and avoidant-oriented coping styles which are related to discharge of negative emotions such as anger, irritation, frustration, or sadness (Rogowska, Kuśnierz & Boksztanin, 2020).

All these coping mechanisms can help a person adapt and bounce back from the adversity they are currently facing. However, there is still a need to look further into the coping mechanisms of college students in order to determine whether they are engaging in

healthy or unhealthy coping mechanisms. Moreover, these results were yielded from foreign countries and considering the difference in cultural, economic, and environmental aspects of living, it is important to explore this matter in the context of Filipino college students.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research design employing Phenomenological Interpretative Research. This research approach helped explore in detail the meanings that particular experiences, events, and states hold for the informants. It involved a detailed examination of the participants' interaction with their world. It also helped interpret personal experiences and their perceptions or accounts towards this event, which in this case were the college students enrolled in University of Saint Louis, who brought to light their lived experiences with prolonged social deprivation, along with its psychological impact, and the coping strategies that they have employed to compensate for the lack of in-person social interaction they have experienced. This study was conducted at the University of Saint Louis, an autonomous university recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in Cagayan Valley Region.

Informants

The informants of the study were twenty (20) college students (14 females; 6 males). They were chosen to become the participants with the use of purposive sampling technique through an inclusion criteria composed of the following: (1) The students were twenty-one years old and below and were not able to have an in-person social interaction either with family, friends, or classmates, for at least two months due to the implementation of quarantine protocols, (2) The students were enrolled at the University of Saint Louis-Tuguegarao, (3) The students were willing to participate in the study. The age of the informants who participated in the study ranges from 20-21 years old and they live in the different provinces of Region II (Isabela; Cagayan; Batanes; Quirino). In addition, they are enrolled in the variety of programs under the following departments: (1) School of Education, Arts, and Sciences; (2) School of Accountancy, Business, and Hospitality; (3) School of Engineering, Architecture, and Information Technology Education; lastly, (4) School of Health and Allied Sciences.

Moreover, the informants are characterized as either: a) College students who did not have any in-person

social interaction with their families, friends, and other people; b) College students who were able to go home to their families but did not have any in-person social interaction with friends, classmates, and other people. In selecting students who did not have any in-person social interaction with their families, friends, and other people, a list was acquired from the proponents of an outreach program that involved the said group of USL students. On the other hand, informants who were able to go home to their families but did not have any in-person social interaction with friends, classmates, and other people were selected by simply inquiring from the college students on how long they have experienced social deprivation. Moreover, a consent letter was given to the participants prior to the interview session. The purpose of the research was explained and all of their queries were promptly addressed. Lastly, informants were given their corresponding codes which were referred to by codes I01 to I20.

Instruments of the Study

The study utilized a one-on-one online interview with the use of Google meet and Facebook Messenger calls to explore the experiences of the college students in prolonged social deprivation, its psychological impacts, and the coping strategies that the students have used in the midst of community quarantine. The researchers employed a semi-structured interview as its data collection technique – a commonly used technique in qualitative research (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). The interview was conducted using an interview guide comprised of predetermined questions, followed by sub-questions. Through this, participants were able to express and elaborate themselves more during the interview. The semi-structured interview format encourages two-way communication. Both the interviewer and the candidate can ask questions, which allows for a comprehensive discussion of pertinent topics (Paine, 2015). Furthermore, the interviews were manually transcribed using the denaturalized approach to transcription (Oliver, et al., 2005; Davidson, 2009 and Bucholtz, 2000). Hence, speech fillers, pauses, and extra linguistic and paralinguistic elements were purposefully omitted.

Procedures

A letter of request was forwarded to Office of the Vice President for Academics for the approval of the conduct of the study. Prior to the start of conducting a one-on-one online interview, informed consent was sent to the informants. Ethical considerations were

strictly employed by the researchers such as briefing the informants that the interview will be recorded, keeping their anonymity and the confidentiality of responses acquired from them. After obtaining the consent to participate, the purpose of the research was explained to them and all of their queries were promptly addressed prior to the start of the interview. Each informant was interviewed by the researchers with a duration of 30 - 45 minutes. After the interview, a manual transcription produced twenty individual verbatim transcripts.

Utilizing the funneling approach (Smith & Osborn, 2008), interview questions were devised to be flexible, neutral and non-leading. Appropriate prompts were employed with initial questions to encourage the participants to elaborate on the details. Every subsequent interview was re-defined by taking novel inputs from the previous one to ensure refinement of the original schedule (Suhail, Iqbal & Smith, 2020). Some of the questions that were asked from the participants were as follows:

1. During the course of community quarantine, what particular changes in your daily life have occurred?
2. During the ECQ, how did the lack of in-person social interaction affect you psychologically?
3. While experiencing prolonged social isolation, what strategies did you use to cope up with the adverse psychological effects of the pandemic?

During the interview, additional queries were given by the researchers as a clarifying method in order to ensure that the data gathered were consistent with what the informants conveyed during the interview.

Results and Discussion

This research study explored the experiences of the college students of University of Saint Louis with regard to the prolonged social deprivation and their coping mechanisms in the midst of community quarantine. Two (2) major findings were considered in this study. The first one discusses the experiences of the students with the prolonged social deprivation brought about by the pandemic. On the other hand, the second talks about the coping strategies that students employed during this experience in order to alleviate the negative impact of prolonged social deprivation in their lives. The results revealed 7 major recurring themes when it comes to the experiences of the students with prolonged social deprivation which include: (1) Academic-Related Student Experiences; (2) Interpersonal-Related Student Experiences; (3)

Personal-Related Experiences; (4) Anxiety-Related Symptoms; (5) Depressive Symptomatology; (6) Stress; and (7) Behavioral Improvement. Meanwhile, five (5) major themes for coping mechanisms were transcribed from the responses of the informants which include: (1) Recreational Activities and Use of Social Media; (2) Spiritual-Related Activities; (3) Intrapersonal-Related Activities; (4) Interpersonal-Related Activities; and (5) Distraction Method.

Experiences of College Students on Prolonged Social Deprivation Brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic

Theme 01: Academic-Related Student Experiences

One of the major themes in this study is the academic-related and student relationship. The result of the study revealed that many of the informants experience lack of teacher-student communication towards their academic concerns. They also experience heightened stress due to overloaded works.

Student-teacher and peer interaction. The role of teacher interaction is vital, particularly in the students' academic development to be able to enhance their academic level of motivation, especially at this new normal way of learning. Peer interaction will enable students' work and foster communication skills that are necessary for their social emotional aspect and social interaction. On the other hand, participants have negative experience towards teacher-student and peer interaction.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I05: "Pagdating sa studies, ang hirap din kasi malayo sila, 'di kami makapag-team up ng classmates pagdating sa mga designs or activities naming sa subjects naming." (When it comes to studies, it was difficult because we are far from each other, I can't team up with my classmates when it comes to our designs or activities in our subject.)

I20: "Yung affection namin with prof before na lagi kaming nag-uusap wala na ngayon." (The affection we had before with our professor where we usually talk with each other is gone now.)

Interaction with peers/classmates and teachers is vital in the field of academics as it allows students to work in different thoughts and perceptions with other people in their field. Lack of student-teacher and peer interaction causes most of the students decrease in motivation particularly in academics. The underlying

concerns of students regarding teacher and peer interaction project lapses because of the lack in-person social interaction between teachers and students. Zhou et al. (2018) used a large-scale academic monitoring data and found that the teacher-student relationship is the most essential factor that affects student performance. In the current online teaching process, increase in teachers' involvement is an effective way to improve teaching efficiency. Additionally, according to some recent studies, teachers could use information technology to help students improve their academic output via giving students more autonomy in learning to achieve the transition from "leaders" to "helpers" of learning (Tian, 2018). The effect of limited interaction to students causes decrease in academic performance, especially when concerns are not immediately addressed, and interactions are lacking between students, peers, and teachers. Moreover, the presence of teacher and peer interaction can establish a feasible online learning environment. This is further validated by a study that states, the interactive teaching method has the largest impact on performance among all other teaching strategies (Yao, Rao, Jiang, Xiong, 2020).

Flexible learning difficulties which resulted to fatigue, exhaustion, and stress. The distance learning provided a wider range of information. However, learning in the new normal became a disadvantage that resulted to students experiencing fatigue, stress, exhaustion etc. that affected the total quality of the education in many ways.

Most of the informants revealed a negative experience towards flexible learning difficulties.

Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I20: "kasi lalo na ngayon sobrang hirap i put together, lalo na pag sobrang daming requirement na to the extent na nakakadrain siya ng student." (Especially now, it is very hard to put things up together, especially when there are so many requirements to the extent that its draining students.)

I06: "Ngayon, pag nag uusap kayo na online lang, parang iba yung dating ng instructions, parang iba yung dating ng pagkasabi nila sayo, dun sa paginternalize mo kung ano yung sinasabi nila." (Currently, when you are communicating online, the instructions seem to be different, the delivery of the instructions seems different especially when you internalize what they are saying.)

Flexible learning modality extends the convenience of time and space, but emphasizes the decrease in quality of instructions. Due to the lack of in-person social interaction with classmates, friends, and teachers,

some of the college students experience difficulties in their academic domain. This research revealed that most of the students acquire negative experience in online learning modality. With the increase workloads, technological problems, and acquisition of knowledge among students resulted to fatigue, exhaustion and stress. According to Armstrong-Mensah et al. (2020), they indicate that one's motivation can influence what they learn, how they learn, and when they choose to learn. Further study states that the physical school closure and the implementation of distance education has led the students to spend less time learning, experience stress, and have a lack of learning motivation (di Pietro et al., 2020). Thus, students had a hard time adjusting to flexible learning modality. In the process of online teaching, teachers should not only assume the role of transmitting knowledge, but also play the role of "leader" and "accompanier" through effective guidance and communication (Yao, Rao, Jiang, Xiong, 2020), though the rapid transition from face-to-face to online learning has been challenging to students. With this, Tiruneh (2020) states that identifying each distance learning challenges and opportunities for children, students, teachers, and families helps determine and control the bottleneck of online teaching and learning challenges.

Theme 02: Interpersonal-Related Student Experiences

Another major theme that was revealed in this study is the interpersonal related experiences of the college students. Interpersonal skills refer to the ability of students to interact and communicate with other people. This will help students value and learn to develop themselves in the long run.

Lack of social support. Social support is an essential instrument for a healthy physical and psychological well-being, which gives emotional comfort to families, friends, classmates, teachers etc.

However, the informants revealed that they have negative experience when it comes to social support. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I03: "Tapos kung may stress like sa quizzes na mababa, wala yung friends ko to comfort me since wala na ngang face-to-face interaction." (Whenever I experience stress, like getting low score in quizzes, my friends were not there to comfort me since there is no face-to-face interaction)

I13: "Nakulangan ako sa social support, personal support tsaka yung motivation ko, kasi parang hindi ko ramdam kasi wala akong kainter action dun sa ibang

mga tao.”(I lacked social support, personal support and motivation, because I don't seem to feel it because I don't have any interaction with other people.)

Social interaction is a good and essential aspect of our lives. However, many students experience lack of social support that resulted to their sense of longingness and support system, especially that they experience social deprivation amidst COVID-19 pandemic. This result is further validated by existing body of knowledge which reported that reduced social interactions, lack of social support, and newly arising stressors associated with the COVID-19 crisis could potentially affect students' mental health negatively (Elmer, Mepham & Stadtfeld, 2020; Stadtfeld, Vörös, Elmer, Boda & Raabe, 2018). Additionally, students mentioned in multiple accounts that they indeed, had a negative experience on social deprivation and they seek support from their family and friends. However, because of the pandemic, in-person social interactions became limited and there has been a gradual decrease of support system which resulted to decrease in their mental health, especially that most of the respondents were far from their family and stayed at their boarding houses for months. Furthermore, the study of Zaki and William (2013) states that individuals draw on others' support as a resource to dampen stress. In addition, perceived close family support was found to influence mental health via resilience (Cao, Yang, Wang, 2018).

Limited and restricted social activities and engagement. Social activities and engagement are important aspects to have a healthy lifestyle, however at this time of pandemic, it might be hard to interact socially or face to face.

Informants revealed a negative experience towards limited and restricted social activities and engagement. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I07: “Dati lumalabas ako bahay para mag-jog, ngayon hindi na rin masiyado kasi as much as possible nililimit ko yung sarili ko from any form of exposure kasi immune-compromised ako.” (I used to go out of the house to jog, but I frequently do it today because I limit myself as much as possible from any form of exposure because I'm immune-compromised.)

I06: “Nung nalimit na yung celebrations, social gathering, parang medyo disappointed ako ng konti, kasi may mga events na di na napupuntahan, na may mga events na dati na-cecelebrate, ngayon hindi na.” (When the celebrations and social gatherings became more limited, I seemed a little disappointed, because there were events that we usually celebrate that I could no longer attend to.)

Social activities and engagement are fundamental aspects of an individual's daily life. Following the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic, different countries around the world rapidly imposed restrictions on physical activities, socialization, gatherings. According to Lee et al. (2021); Man et al. (2017); Wang et al., (2017), the lack of social interaction and engagement leads to loneliness, which is a painful emotional state caused by a discrepancy between a person's desired meaningful social relationships and the perceived present relationships. Students mentioned in different accounts that during the pandemic, they isolate themselves from their houses/boarding houses due to the implementation of community quarantine. They cannot attend to some of their celebrations, and they cannot also perform some of their physical activities. With this, deprivation, and restriction of students from social interaction and physical activities, it resulted to a decrease in their healthy lifestyle. In addition, Santini et al. (2020) states that both social disconnectedness and perceived isolation can increase the risk of mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Having few social activities or infrequent social activities and feeling lonely or lacking support can heighten reactions to stress exposure and reduce individuals' coping abilities.

Family-related Interaction and Engagement.

Interaction with family members is enormously important, as it allows members of the family to express their feelings and thoughts towards each other. This can also lessen the stress and other health problems faced in this pandemic. This support is vital especially in the trying times of COVID-19. Moreover, the informants revealed a positive experience toward family-related interaction and engagement. Some of the verbalizations of the informant are as follows:

I06: “Pero meron namang binigay yung pandemic na nabigyan ng chance na more time with family, yun yung advantage na binigay naman ng Covid pandemic.” (But the advantage that this COVID-19 pandemic brought me was, the chance to be able to spend more time with my family.)

I19: “Most of the time po tumatawag/video call ako dito sa amin sa family ko and then nanonood ganon po as a distraction na rin po siguro.” (Most of the time I call/video call with my family and then watch as a form of distraction maybe)

Interaction with family members brings comfort to the students and can also provide encouragement which the students need in facing the hardship that this pandemic brought. In addition, it can also be observed

that there are two ways on how the college students were able to establish closer relationship with their family. One is due to having more time spent in their homes rather than outside with social circles. According to Salin, Kaittila, Hakovirta and Anttila (2020), physical distancing altered and reduced both parents' and children's social contacts outside the family and increased the time spent as a family at home. Second is through the use of online communication which was also found in this study to have increased due to some students not being able to go home this pandemic. Hence, most of the students view this sub-theme positively for even at this trying time, they were able to engage more with their families. These positive experiences benefited most of the students as they interact with their family members even when they are away from their social circles. Results from previous study found that a lack of family closeness and support are developmental risk factors that can predict children's feelings of loneliness (Sharabi et al., 2012). Consistent with this promising avenues to lessen negative impacts of social deprivation as time with family, time connecting with friends, as well as physical activity were related to lessen loneliness, beyond COVID-19 stress (Ellis, Dumas, & Forbes 2020).

Concurrently, students who spend more time with their family experience less stress. Moreover, spending some time interacting with parents and siblings, whether in person or through video calls, was also associated with lower level of loneliness and depressive symptoms amidst experiencing social deprivation brought about by the pandemic.

Theme 03: Personal-Related Experiences

Another theme of this study is the Personal-Related Experiences of the college students at this time of COVID-19 pandemic. The result of this study has shown that students' well-being was affected by different factors as stated in the 3 subthemes of this study.

Increased boredom. Boredom comes with the inadequate attention and lack of interest in what's happening around you, manifested by an empty feeling or feeling of loneliness and sense of frustration which can result to poor performance of task that requires attention. Moreover, the informants revealed a negative experience in their personal-related experience when it comes to boredom. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I13: "Medyo boring narin ang buhay dahil nga di na

ko pumapasok di ko na nakikita yung mga kaibigan ko." (Life is also a bit boring because I don't go to school, and I don't see my friends anymore)

I06: "Ngayon sa bahay na lang, walang ginagawa, boring, very plain yung buhay, paulit-ulit, very dull, parang ganun lang" (Now I'm just at our home, I have nothing to do, my life feels very plain, repetitive, and very dull. Just like that.)

As students are deprived from social interaction, they have described on multiple accounts the boredom that they have gone through, most especially in the earliest on-set of the implementation of community quarantine. According to the result, this scenario happened to the students mainly because of spending more time on their own. Moreover, it has also been cited by the students that the removal of in-person interaction which used to be a huge part of their everyday life and having repetitive tasks on a daily basis have also caused the boredom they have experienced. While this experience is common, results also reveal that it is most prevalent among students who have stayed in boarding houses or apartments during this time. Consistently, according to a recent study, confinement, loss of usual routine, and reduced social and physical contact with others were frequently shown to cause boredom, frustration, and a sense of isolation from the rest of the world, which was distressing to participants (Brooks et. al., 2020). With this distressing situation of social deprivation, students applied coping mechanisms to reduce their boredom. However, students also mentioned from different accounts that as they experience boredom due to this pandemic, it causes stress and overthinking especially that most of the participants were alone at their boarding houses. Moreover, recent study states that boredom and isolation will cause distress; people who are quarantined should be advised about what they can do to stave off boredom and be provided with practical advice on coping and stress management techniques (Brooks et al., 2020; Rubin & Wessely, 2020).

Minimal life adjustment. Adjustments were followed in this new normal, especially in academic aspects. Moreover, the informants revealed both positive and negative experiences when it comes to their adjustment at this time of pandemic. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I20: "Yung changes sa akin medyo okay pa kasi I cannot always talk with people so parang okay lang na kahit 'di kumausap ng tao sa isang buong araw." (The changes for me are still pretty okay because I cannot always talk with people, so it seems okay even if I don't talk to people all day)

I18: “Homebody kasi ako, so comfortable ako na meron akong time para sa sarili ko, na nandito lang ako sa house ganiyan, so parang hindi siya big change for me.” (I’m a homebody so I am comfortable since I have time for myself and that I only stay inside the house. It was not a big change for me.)

At this time of pandemic, adjustment is really a vital process which one must perform in many aspects of life. Some of the students viewed the pandemic positively as they are able to adapt to changes way easier than the others. Interestingly, findings of this study reveal that students’ personality and characteristic have influenced how they adjust with the prolonged social deprivation. It shows that students who experience minimal adjustment consider themselves as introvert, and do not usually interact with other people. These findings are supported by recent studies which indicate that individuals with higher coping flexibility are predicted to experience negative impacts of being socially deprived than those who have lower coping flexibility which in contrast, has been linked to psychological symptoms (Cheng, Wang, & Ebrahimi, 2021). Hence, they are used to doing solitary activities and spending their time alone making it easier for them to adjust with the lack of in-person social interaction brought about by the pandemic. However, further studies state that adolescents’ stress about COVID-19 was significantly related to poorer adjustment, including more reported depression and greater loneliness (Ellis, Dumas & Forbes, 2020). During this pandemic, adjustment of college students was vital especially in the academic, social and psychological domain. It was expected that time with friends and family, and physical activity would relate to positive adjustment beyond COVID-19 stress (Ellis et. Al., 2020). Students’ flexibility in adapting to a new situation, as well as coping with the adverse effect of social deprivation, is one factor that fosters positive adjustment to stressful situations and reduced anxiety and stress due to the rapid transition of new normal way of living.

More opportunities for rest and recreational activities. Rest can reduce stress and can improve the overall health of an individual. It can also restore energy and can improve focus and mood. Moreover, recreational activities improve physical and mental health and also help in developmental growth. Moreover, the informants revealed positive experience when it comes to their adjustment at this time of pandemic. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I15: “Pero sa akin kasi bilang isang anti-social /

introvert medyo okay sya sa akin parang naging comfortable or rest sa akin.” (But for me, as an anti-social/Introvert, the pandemic seems okay with me, I sometimes feel comfortable and it also gave me an opportunity to rest)

I08: “Yung ECQ parang bakasyon siya sa akin, so yun di ko alam kung positive siya or negative, pero naging bakasyon siya for me, I guess.” (The ECQ is like a vacation to me, so I don’t know if it’s positive or negative, but it felt like a vacation for me, I guess.)

Since the COVID-19 outbreak started, it imposed physical and mental health conflicts. Due to this, doing recreational activities such as physical exercises have helped lessen the consequences of the pandemic, as it will develop mental and physical strength of an individual. The lack of rest and recreational activities may affect the student’s mental, academic, and physical well being. According to the study of Khan et al. (2020), fear of infection, financial uncertainty, inadequate food supply, absence of physical exercise and limited or no recreational activity had significant association with stress, anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic symptoms. Moreover, results show that most of the students had more opportunities and time to rest and do recreational activities to compensate feelings of deprivation from social connections. Interestingly, students who mentioned to have more opportunities for recreation also perceived the prolonged social deprivation as a positive event further describing it like a vacation. This is consistent with the study conducted by Kim, Sung, Park & Dittmore (2015) indicating that participating in leisure activities with positive attitude can enhance the level of well-being and life satisfaction. Importantly, adolescents’ reported behaviours during the initial weeks of the crisis were significantly related to adjustment beyond COVID-19 stress, and in some cases moderated the relationship between stress and adjustment (Ellis, Dumas, & Forbes, 2020).

Theme 4. Anxiety-Related Symptoms

One of the major psychological effects of prolonged social deprivation that was revealed in the study was Anxiety-related symptoms. In general, many of the informants mentioned of having an increase in the level of their anxiety when they experience the prolonged social deprivation. Heightened overthinking and having reoccurring negative thoughts were some of the major symptoms cited by the informants. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I02: “Dati kasi palagi akong may kasama dito at may nakaka-usap ako. Pero noong ako na lang, may mga

times na nag-o-overthink ako kasi wala na talaga akong maka-usap. Dahil doon, madami akong naiisip about sa fears and doubts, like “kaya ba ‘tong online class na ako lang?” ganoon.” (I used to always have someone I can personally talk to. However, when I was on my own already, there were times that I would overthink since I am alone, and I don’t have anyone I can talk to. Because of this, I started thinking about a lot of things such as my fears and doubts, thoughts like ‘Can I survive this online class [on my own]?’)

I14: “Dati kasi sobrang positive ko tao ngayon medyo nagiging negative na ako. Kwinekwestyon ko na “bakit ko pa kinuha tong course na ‘to? Bakit nagkaganito? Though dati namo-motivate ko pa sarili ko pero ngayon parang nagda-doubt nadin ako iniisip ko na kaya ko pa ba o ‘di na? Ganun. Yes, associated yung pagkakaroon ng negative thoughts ko sa kawalan ng social interaction with friends, kasi kapag face to face may mga mag cocomfort sayo pero ngayon kasi parang hirap ako mag cope-up ng ganito.” (I usually have a positive perspective. But now, I have become a negative person. I started questioning ‘Why I took this course?’ or ‘Why are these things happening?’. Though I used to motivate myself, at present, I started doubting whether I can do this or not. The presence of my negative thoughts is associated with the lack of social interaction with friends because back then, someone can just comfort you. But right now, I feel like I am really having difficulty to cope with the situation.)

In-person social interaction was mentioned in the responses as the students’ way of buffering unhealthy and negative behaviors in the past. Hence, when such interaction was restricted due to the pandemic, the informants directly cited prolonged social deprivation as a direct cause of the various anxiety-related symptoms that they have experienced while being in community quarantine. With the indication of having doubts related to the students’ academic life and other personal problems, it implies that being alone in their apartments and/or staying in the confines of their homes has caused the students to excessively ponder on their negative thoughts, making them prone to overthinking. It also appeared that not being able to see their family and friends has also caused them to worry not only for their safety, but also for the safety of the people close to them. These kinds of thoughts and concerns can lead to feelings of uncertainty and fear. Coupled with those is the concern revealed in the result that these students cannot vent out their thoughts to anyone and have to deal with it on their own. These, in turn, have significantly contributed to their increasing level of anxiety during this time. This finding now suggests how vital social interaction is to

the mental health of students. Specifically, it indicates that being away from family and social circles leads to lack of support in dealing with difficult situations. Thus, the lack of in-person social interaction can catalyze detrimental effects such as experiencing symptoms related to anxiety.

This result is validated by existing body of knowledge which reported that prevalence of anxiety is high among college students who are socially deprived due to the pandemic (Xiao, 2020; Kmietowicz et al., 2020; Lima et al., 2020; Galea et al. 2020; Cao et al. 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Moreover, the informants’ responses were also consistent with the findings of most of the recent studies on mental health consequences of being socially deprived, where it specifically posits that anxiety can be one of the major sequelae of the absence of an actual social interaction (Wang et al., 2020; Tee et al., 2020). Following this, researches centered on the pandemic and its impact to global mental health have also established a link between physical distancing and/or social deprivation and increasing level of anxiety for individuals living in areas that implemented lockdowns (Brooks et al., 2020; Rajkumar, 2020; Rubin & Wessely, 2020).

Theme 5. Depressive Symptomatology

A significant number of informants reported depressive symptomatology. With most of the students’ time spent alone and within the confines of their homes, the generated responses talked about experiencing common symptoms related to depression. These symptoms were mild for some but were quite severe for others. This led us to the sub-themes which include:

Crying Spells. Crying Spells is one of the more common depression-related symptoms. Difficulty in handling emotions, which leads to frequent crying outburst in some of the respondents, was reported. Most of the time, respondents do not understand why they kept having sudden and unexplained crying spells. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I07: “Duon sa buong month last year, as in sobrang hindi ko na-handle ng mabuti yung emotions ko. Like, meron yung instances na gabi-gabi na iiyak ko ganun out nowhere, kasi parang di ko ma-explain parang too much na lang din siguro dagdag ng requirements.” (There was a month from last year where I wasn’t able to handle my emotions well. There were also instances where I was crying almost every night out of nowhere. I can’t explain, I guess there was also too much

[academic] requirements that time.)

I12: “Matutulala nalang ako bigla minsan tapos iiyak ako o mag me-mental breakdown ako. Like sa isip kailangan ko ng friends ko, or kaylangang kong maging masaya.” (I would suddenly stare at nowhere then start crying or have a mental breakdown. [My thoughts were], ‘I need my friends,’ or ‘I need to be happy.’)

Sense of Loneliness and Hopelessness. Respondents also presented a classic symptom of depression, which is feelings of loneliness and/or helplessness. Many of them have explained that their loneliness was a result of being alone. Some mentioned how different it was when there was still an in-person interaction with family and friends. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I01: “Since mag-isa ako, nakakaramdam po ako ng sadness, although meron namang nakaka-usap.” (Since I was alone, I felt the feeling of sadness even though I still talk to some people at that time.)

I04: “Napaisip na lang ako that time na sana ini-enjoy ko na lang noong hindi pa tayo naka-lockdown kasi sobrang lungkot yung tipong ang layo ko sa family ko. Iba kasi yung feeling na nakikipag-social interact ka sa labas.” (I thought at that time that I should have had more fun and enjoyed more when we were not yet placed on a lockdown because it was really sad to be away from my family. The feeling is really different when we can be outside and have social interaction.)

Loss of Interest and Motivation. Another sub-theme that emerged under depressive symptomatology is the loss of interest and motivation on the part of the students who experienced prolonged social deprivation. This has caused them to observe adverse changes in how they behave and function as individuals on a daily basis. Some have expressed lack of motivation in terms of academic responsibilities. Some have also reported lack of interest in staying connected with others. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I07: “Parang meron yung mga instances na as in na-drain ako sa lahat, wala akong ganang makipag-usap kahit kanino, eh hindi ako ganun before.” (There were some instances during that time where I felt drained from everything. I even lost interest to talk to anyone. I was like not like that before [the pandemic].)

I05: “Napansin ko na parang nawalan ako ng gana sa pag-gawa ng requirements kasi walang kasamang gumawa ganon.” (I observed that I was not motivated to finish my school requirements because I don’t have anyone to do them with.)

I12: “Feeling ko mas tumindi yung depression ko noong mag-isa ako. Feeling ko na parang ayoko nalang mag-function at all.” (I feel like my depression heightened when I was alone. It felt like I just didn’t want to function at all.)

Changes in sleep pattern. Apparently, change in sleep pattern also emerged as one of the sub-themes. A response mentioned that the respondent experienced a desire to sleep due to the stress and change of mood rooted from the lack of in-person social interaction. The excessive sleepiness or sleeping too much is commonly associated with depression. Here is the verbalization of the informant:

I10: “[...] gusto ko nalang lagi matulog. Para sakin, sobrang stressful yung situation, siyempre kasi hindi lang naman sa sarili ko yung nag iiba, syempre pati yung pakikitungo ko din sa iba.” ([...] I just want to sleep all the time. For me, it was a really stressful situation because it is not only me who changed, but also how I interact with others.)

Physical Changes. Physical changes also emerged as one of the sub-themes during the analysis of data. Due to the adverse psychological impact of prolonged social deprivation, a respondent observed physical change, specifically severe weight loss during this time. Here is the verbalization of the informant:

I17: “Yung physical ko lahat nagbago simula nung nagsuffer ako ng depression, pumayat talaga ako [...]. ‘Di maalagaan sarili ko kasi nagfocus ako sa problem ko.” (I had physical changes when I suffered from depression. I really lost weight [...] I was not able to take care of myself because I was so focused on my problem.)

Being socially connected or acquiring in-person social interaction is a way to foster positive emotions and has served as a protective factor against depressive symptoms (Jose, Paul & Lim, Bee, 2014). However, with the combined efforts of people to stay safe and stop the spread of the virus, their usual way of seeing or interacting with family, friends, or other acquaintances has been put to an indefinite pause. This is why loneliness, along with other common depressive symptomatology mentioned, is prevalently being experienced in the era of COVID-19. Based on the responses, all these symptoms stem from the lack of in-person social interaction. From the students’ accounts, it appears that students had a difficulty in handling negative emotions such as loneliness and even stress on their own. Other sources of stress such as academic and interpersonal-related stressors have

also been experienced by the students during the pandemic, which has contributed to increasing level of negative emotions. In turn, the difficulty in regulating negative emotions has eventually caused them to experience depressive-like symptoms. In addition, college students are also in a developmental phase, where social interaction is most vital as they spend more time with social circles than being alone or with family. Hence, with the online modality of learning in different Universities where students are subjected to stay on their perspective home or apartments, their social interaction becomes completely restricted. Hence, these students also limit the usual people whom they are comfortable sharing their problems and concerns with. This can imply that they lack significant connection with people which is considered as a buffer against depression. Now, this can compromise the physical health of the students such as poorer sleep quality and losing weight. These findings are supported by existing knowledge that indicates social deprivation, loneliness, and mental health (Brummett et al., 2001; Mushtaq et al., 2014; Labrague, Santos & Falguera, 2020; Barreto et al., 2021; Bu et al., 2020; Rauschenberg et al., 2020). In addition, Fancourt, Steptoe & Bu (2021) also suggested in their research that the highest levels of depression occurred in the early stages of lockdown. This finding agrees with the result of the current study where the college students experienced the height of the above-mentioned depressive symptomatology in the early onset of the pandemic, where social interaction was highly impossible to acquire due to strict implementation of lockdowns. Similarly, Tull et al. (2020) suggested that measures such as community quarantine have contributed to a sense of loneliness among young people as they are being restricted from having in-person social interaction with their peers. On the other hand, complaints on disrupted sleep patterns, specifically excessive desire for sleep was also mentioned in the result of the study. This finding is validated by recent studies that revealed how university students have been experiencing poorer sleep quality while in community quarantine (Marelli et al., 2020; Chen, Sun & Feng, 2020). Moreover, recent researches are also in line with the findings of the study on physical change. The study of de Wit, van Straten, Lamers, Cuijpers, & Penninx in (2015) posits that depressive disorders are highly associated with gaining weight.

Theme 6. Stress

With the gathered responses, results revealed that majority of the informants have cited heightened stress levels as a psychological impact of prolonged social

deprivation. Some have directly mentioned the difficulties in communication as the source of stress. A significant number of informants, on the other hand have referred to academics and challenges faced with the lack of face-to-face education as their main stressors during this time. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I16: “Siguro yung pressure sa school works na-feel ko. parang sobrang hirap kasi sasarilinin ko lang lahat parang ‘di ko mailabas yung problems kasi wala naman yung friends ko na mas makakaintindi sa’kin.” (I think the pressures from school got to me. It was really hard because I have to deal things on my own. It felt like I can’t let my problems out because I don’t have my friends who can understand me.)

I18: “Sa mental health ko pababa siya nang pababa nagiging unstable na siya. Mas na-i-stress ako kasi hindi ko ma-express yung feelings ko sa chat the way na i-express ko kapag face-to-face”. (I feel like my mental health became unstable. I was also more stressed because I am not able to express my feelings through chat the way I express it in face-to-face.)

I19: “Nakaka-stress siya sa kin kasi wala akong ma-approach lalo na pandemic. Parang sinasarili ko muna unlike before may mga nakakausap ako na pwede lang ako magrant, pwede lang ako mag-open up.” (It was so stressful for me because it felt like I do not have anyone to approach during this pandemic. I have to keep it all in unlike before that I can just talk to anyone, I can rant, and I can open up.)

Multiple accounts from the respondents also presented heightened level of stress that is related to different aspects of their lives such as personal, social, and educational. Again, this psychological impact seems to be an adverse outcome of being confined within their homes and not being able to have an actual social interaction. In general, social deprivation has been considered as a stress-inducing characteristic of the pandemic (Shanahan et al., 2020). Moreover, the students have emphasized how their social interaction and connections with other people provide emotional support to them and help reduce the damaging effects of stress they have experienced. This would imply then that with the evident lack of in-person social interaction, the students do not receive adequate amount of social support needed to buffer stress. Interestingly, their academic-related difficulty was also mentioned as stressor, wherein it was emphasized that dealing with things alone is one of the challenges that they face. It has been reported as a common experience among the college students due to the lack of face-to-face interaction and challenges in communication with teachers and co-students. As a

result, it has caused them to have difficulty in adjusting and coping with the new normal way of education. To add to that, being confined in their homes or being alone in their apartments has also contributed to stress for it prevents them from having any opportunity to share their problems with others. All these, in turn, have contributed to the increasing level of stress experienced by the students in the midst of the community quarantine. In connection, various researches support this result for social deprivation. Such findings correspond with recent studies which prove that the lacking amount of in-person social interaction has made it harder for students to buffer the stress that they experienced during the course of the pandemic (Wang et al., 2020; Tee et al., 2020; Ellis, Dumas, & Forbes, 2020; Mosanya, 2020; Elmer, Mephram & Stadtfeld, 2020; Stadtfeld, Vörös, Elmer, Boda & Raabe, 2018).

Theme 7. Behavioral Improvement

Interestingly, a few participants reported that the lack of in-person interaction has led to personal behavioral improvement. For some, the prolonged social isolation provided an opportunity to reflect and gain a deeper understanding of themselves. On the other hand, some responses also mentioned about going through a positive transformation during the lockdown. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I03: “Yung time na mag-isa ako, parang mas nagkaroon ako ng opportunity na i-appreciate at pahalagahan yung mga bagay-bagay like health, education, tsaka yung pag-bigay ng help sa ibang tao. Parang mas may time din ako na mag-reflect on things.” (During those times where I am alone, it seems like I had an opportunity to appreciate and give importance to things such as health, education, and helping other people. I also had more time to reflect on different things.)

I16: “Overall, effect ng lack of social interaction sa akin is parang natuto ako na intindihin yung sarili ko tapos kapag ‘di na kayang i-take ng sarili ko, natuto na ako to reach to other people.” (Overall, the effect of the lack of social interaction for me is that I learned to understand myself and I also learned how to reach out to other people when I feel like I can’t deal with things anymore.)

I17: “This pandemic, narealize ko na ikaw at ikaw lang yung makakasagot o solve ng problems mo. Kaya po natuto po akong maging independent.” (During this pandemic, I realized that you are the only one who can answer and solve your own problems. That is I why I learned to become independent.)

Majority of the result shows the negative impact of prolonged social deprivation to the general well-being of college students. But interestingly, this study also revealed that few of the respondents reported to have positive experiences and desirable behavioral changes amidst a trying situation they were going through. These results can be cited from the accounts of the students who had minimal adjustment with the lack of in-person social interaction or from informants who claim that their personality is more of an introvert type. These are the types of students who are used to solitary activities and spend majority of their time alone either in their apartments or homes. Hence, it was easier for them to adjust and cope with the prolonged social deprivation. Moreover, they also perceive the prolonged social deprivation as a positive event. As a result, they saw this as an opportunity to foster self-care, reflect on various situations, understand themselves better, and even learn to become independent. Therefore, this result would imply that the personality, as well as how the students perceive social deprivation, affected the type of experience they acquired in the midst of the community quarantine.

Coping Mechanisms Utilized by College Students

It was found out in this study that coping strategies were being utilized by college students. Uncertainty and abrupt changes during this period of social deprivation are prone to worsen such sentiments. Students who are separated from their social support system and extracurricular activities at school may feel less attached to their friends, groups, and hobbies. Moreover, in this study, majority of the informants were able to carry out some coping strategies. The following are sub-themes under this category which include:

Theme 1. Recreational Activities and Use of Social Media

Being active not only keeps an individual fit and healthy, but also delivers a variety of social and emotional advantages. Recreational activities provide a healthier option to positive behavior, leading to possibilities for learning and living a balanced, productive life. Social media, on the other hand, may be utilized to actively alter one's thoughts and behaviors in response to the present crisis. Thus, it also provides a wide range of coping options and can also be utilized to get social support.

Engagement to Physical Fitness Activities and Sports. Sports has a positive impact on students

mostly through physical exercise. Thus, every day since lockdown happened is a fresh chance for the students to engage in physical fitness activity and sports, instead of engaging in unhealthy coping behaviors or strategies. In this study, informants perform numerous numbers of physical fitness activities and sports as a coping mechanism. Generally, some informants experienced a positive outcome when engaging in physical fitness activities and sports as a coping mechanism in response to the present crisis. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follow:

I17: “Dancing po, and ginaagawa ko yung kapag wala na po talaga akong magawa or gusto ko na rin talagang sabihin kung ano yung nararamdaman ko, ine-express ko nalang through dancing.” (Dancing, I do that when I really do not have anything to do or if I really want to say how I feel, I just express it through dancing.)

I09: “Kung sa mga hobbies ko naman, noong humupa na yung pandemic noong puwede na lumabas yung tao, at least nakaka-bike ako o kaya nakaka-basketball but with safety precaution naman.” (As for my hobbies, when the community protocols lay lowed, was able to ride or roam around with a bike or play basketball but of course with safety precaution.)

Due to frequent exercise, such as doing workouts at home during the lockdown, the students become capable of overcoming such sentiments or challenges. Students were able to reveal that physical activity can help reduce stress reactivity and boost resiliency. Physical activity has also been highlighted in the literature as an important coping strategy. It has also been shown to help with stress reactivity, according to a growing body of evidence (Mücke et al., 2018) and to enhance resiliency (Childs and de Wit, 2014). There is also a sufficient literature which shows that sports and physical activities can also play an important role in the promotion of healthy mental health and well-being (Mazyarkin et al., 2019; Kaur, H., Singh, T., Arya, Y. K., & Mittal, S. 2020). The results pointed to a possible link between physical activity as a coping mechanism for social connection and stress management, as well as how college students deal with stress in particular.

Engagement to Arts and Crafts. Doing arts and crafts has been more accessible throughout the pandemic, since cultural organizations such as galleries, museums, and other academic facilities have responded to community quarantine guidelines. In this study, some informants actively engage to arts and crafts as coping mechanism. Generally, a number of informants reported positive outcome towards

engagement to arts and craft as a coping mechanism in response to the present crisis. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I07: “[...] nagbe-bake ako or nagpe-paint ako kasi isa rin talaga sa hobby ko ang painting,[...]” ([...] I bake and also paint because painting really is one of my hobby,[...])

I13: “Ang ginagawa ko minsan, nagiging productive nalang ako minsan like gumagawa ang arts,[...]” (“What I do sometimes is, I sometimes become productive by doing arts,[...])

I14: “[...] kung minsan naman sumasayaw, kumakanta para lang maiwasan yung masyadong pag o-overthink kasi mas lalong nakaka stress kapag inisip mo pa lalo lahat ng mga bagay na nag papa-stress sa’yo.” ([...] sometimes, I dance and sing just to avoid overthinking too much because it gets more stressful when you think about all the things that stresses you out.)

According to several students, the COVID-19 pandemic's emotional challenges include prolonged isolation, built-up anxieties, and fears. However, using arts and crafts, students were able to communicate from a distance, producing happiness, appreciation, and optimism and also promotes well-being. This result is further validated by this finding where it shows that producing art for a short amount of time can considerably lower a person's anxiety, which could have implications for art and art therapy programs that assist college students and others in coping with stress (Sandmire, Gorham, Rankin, & Grimm, 2012). Furthermore, a lot of individuals saw a greater interest in the arts and crafts. The students in particular, have turned art and crafts participation as a source of comfort and coping mechanism. When Braus and Morton (2020) say, “most individuals are engaging in forms of art therapy by leveraging our natural need to “create” and “express,” they are referring to the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. These outlets help to alleviate feelings of loneliness. Thus, in this study, college students develop a positive attitude towards engagement to arts and crafts as a coping mechanism in response to the present crisis. Also, being creative is a fun technique for students to learn about themselves and how to combat the physical and mental effects of the pandemic. Arts and crafts were practiced by the students, whether art-making at home, viewing and listening to plays and music, or doing new found culinary hobbies.

Social Media Engagement. Social media has become an integral part of students’ life, and various psychological processes have been linked to social

media engagement. Since it may be a source of social support, social media engagement may also be a component of well-being, as most of the informants carry out social media engagement as coping strategy. Generally, many informants reported a positive outcome towards social media engagement as a coping mechanism in response to the present crisis. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I09: “[...] sa messenger, lagi ko naman kinakamusta yung mga tropa ko, and sa facebook. I just keep sharing memes minsan, and I tag my friends rin para to know na kahit quarantine is hindi ko pa rin sila nakakalimutan minsan.” ([...] on messenger, I always check and greet my group of friends and also on Facebook. I just keep on sharing memes and I tag my friends too, to know that even though quarantine, I did not forget them.)

I12: “Meron yung nauso sa messenger na kung saan we share screen na pwede kayong manood dalawa, ganun yung ginagawa namin ng mga friends ko nung senior high pati rin yung mga friends ko ngayon. Nag uusap din kami through gmail, messenger, nakikipag usap parin naman kami sa isa’t isa.” (There is a trend in messenger where we share our screen and the two of you can watch, that's what my friends in senior high and college do. We also talked through gmail and messenger, we still have talk to each other.)

I14: “Kinakausap ko ung mga friends ko minsan at kapag nag vivideo call kami, nag lalabsan kami ng mga rants sa buhay.” (I sometimes talk to my friends and once we make video call, we talked about our rants in life.)

The social isolation and health risks induced by the COVID-19 condition can lead to negative emotions and loneliness, thus, using social media to cope with these feelings could be a useful method. Therefore, in this study, it was revealed that social media engagement is essential for the students when it comes to supporting and carrying out such coping mechanisms. During lockdown, students usually use social media to compensate for a lack of social connection. This result is further validated by existing body of knowledge where it was revealed that students' use of technology (mobile applications, gaming, and the internet) has also evolved as a coping technique to compensate for the absence of in-person social interaction (Wang et al., 2020; Balhara, Kattula, Singh, Chukkali & Bhargava, 2020). Similarly, it was found out that during the extraordinary time of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining their social contacts through social media helped others and themselves preserve their mental well-being (Cao et al., 2020; Ristovnik, Keržič, Ravšelj, Tomažević, &

Umek, 2020). It is also being utilized to actively change student's thinking and behavior to deal with the problem. The students pursue methods to alleviate their discomfort, such as seeking for knowledge on social media platforms, even though they have little influence over the situation. One of the four primary subjects discussed on Twitter was how to prevent COVID-19 from spreading and the information is frequently disseminated via social media (even by governments). Furthermore, social media is utilized for recreational purposes, such as playing games and watching hilarious videos (Older, 2009; Ho SS, Detenber BH, Rosenthal S, et al. 2014; Abd-Alrazaq A, Alhuwail D, Househ M, et al. 2020; Vos SC, Sutton JS, Yu Y, et al. 2018; Sheroun, Wankhar, Devrani, Lissamma, & Chatterjee, 2020). As a result, college students are turning social media as coping mechanism against COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., memes). Humorous coping does improve the student's happiness by diverting their focus away from negative emotions. Thus, social media engagement with friends and family is employed as a coping strategy to remain connected and also to have such social support.

Playing Mobile Games. Computer or mobile games are considered as cliched pastimes for younger generations. But as we are subjected to stay at home, mobile games can also be utilized as coping mechanisms, where it has received greater attention in recent months as a by-product of quarantine. The following verbalizations of the informants provide evidence for mobile games' ability to help students carry out mobile games as a coping mechanism. Generally, some informants revealed a positive outcome towards mobile games as a coping mechanism in response to the present crisis. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I01: “I tried many ways to divert my attention po. [...] Nag-lalaro din po ako ng video games like mobile legends and Call of duty.” (I tried many ways to divert my attention. [...] I also play video games like mobile legends and Call of duty.)

I03: “[...] yung mobile games yung tumulong sa akin na mawala yung kabo-ringang last year.” ([...] mobile games helped me get rid of my boredom last year.)

I05: “Yung paglalaro ng mga online games [...]. Yun lang naman yung mga ginagawa ko noong wala akong nakaka-interact.” (Playing online games [...] That's what I do when I have no one to interact with.)

Since most of the online games offer in-game chat, either by voice or text, these digital platforms can be useful for communicating and keeping in touch with people. According to the students, mobile games can

be a fun and practical way to maintain social interactions and overcome feelings of boredom and isolation amidst the community quarantine. Playing mobile games, on the other hand, isn't only about challenges, fun, or innovation, but it is also a fantastic method for them to make significant social connections and strengthen bonds. They may link them with a caring and therapeutic environment, which is especially important at this time. Gaming with friends, whether competitively or recreationally, is a fantastic way to de-stress. And these responses were consistent with the findings of the recent studies about playing video games during the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on players' well-being, where it specifically posits that during the COVID-19 pandemic, playing mobile games improved participants' perceptions of their well-being. Games have given a fun way to keep in touch with friends and a stress-relieving and cognitively engaging way to avoid the effects of confinement (Barr & Copeland, 2021). These findings also show the need of focusing on the students' coping mechanisms in order to determine the possibility of them using mobile games as a coping mechanism for negative emotions or stress.

Theme 2. Spiritual Related Activities

Spiritual activities are important and more emphasized when a crisis happens. These activities help individuals strengthen their minds in dealing with problems and difficulties that they encounter in life. In this study, some of the students reportedly engage in spiritual activities to cope up with their negative experiences on social deprivation. Generally, the informants reported that spiritual activities help them develop positive outcomes during the pandemic. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I12: "Tapos syempre nag dadasal ako, nag rorosary ako, nakikinig ako ng mga salita ng Diyos para "sane" parin ako kumbaga pag katapos ng pandemic na to." (I pray, I pray the rosary prayer, I listen to the words of God so that I am still sane after this pandemic.)

I15: "Na trigger yung anxiety ko and super hirap labanan or I overcome, pero yun nga I always read the bible kaya kahit papaano nakakayan ko." (My anxiety was triggered, and it was too difficult to fight or overcome it, but I always read the bible that is why somehow I was able to withstand it.)

In this study, some of the students engage to spiritual activities and practice their religious beliefs as a means of enhancing and maintaining their well-being to overcome adversities. Praying and reading the bible are the most common spiritual activities reported by

the students. According to them, doing these activities helps them gain a positive outlook such as being hopeful towards the situation they experience. Thus, they cope up by strengthening their faith and focusing on spiritual growth. This finding is consistent with a recent study that indicates the protective role of spirituality and religious practices which are connected not only with psychological and mental, but also to physical health (Coppola, Rania, Parisi & Lagomarsino, 2021). This is further supported by a study which found out the high use of religious and spiritual beliefs during the pandemic which was also associated with better health outcomes, such as higher levels of hopefulness and lower levels of fear, worry and sadness in the more religious and spiritual students (Lucchetti et al., 2020). Furthermore, a study conducted by Fatima et al. (2020) suggests the need for religious and spiritual optimism to counter the ongoing distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the finding in this study features the significant role of spirituality in coping up with the adverse consequences of prolonged social deprivation.

Theme 3. Intrapersonal-Related Activities

By experiencing social deprivation, some students started to adjust on their solitariness. The pandemic situation became a time for them to engage in intrapersonal related activities, which they regarded as a way to adapt well in their experiences on social deprivation. There were only few students who revealed that they engage in intrapersonal-related activities as a response to their experiences on social deprivation. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I07: "Sa social deprivation ang ginagawa kong mechanism is yung nagrereflect ako tapos iniisip ko ano yung puwede kong gawin." (For social deprivation, the mechanism that I do is I reflect and I think of the things that I can do.)

I08: "Well, aside from like you know, of course taking care of myself."

Intrapersonal-related activities, as mentioned by few students, can be described as the solitary efforts conducted by a student to monitor his well-being and sustain wellness. During the pandemic, some of the students regarded social deprivation as a time for self-reflection and self-care. Few students have reported that by engaging in self-reflection, they become more critical in perceiving the situations they encounter during the pandemic. Based on their statements, during the time they experience social deprivation, self-reflection helped them produce healthy attitudes such

as learning to be independent and being appreciative of the things they currently have.

Theme 4. Interpersonal-Related Activities

Amidst pandemic, some students found their own ways to sustain their interaction with other people. Through the utilization of social media platforms, they were able to reach and communicate with their friends and families from distant places. These aid them to compensate for their lack of interaction. Majority of the students reportedly engage in an online interaction with their friends and family during the pandemic to remain connected with them. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I03: “Nakikipag-video call din ako with friends para makausap pa rin sila.” (I video call with my friends so that I can still talk to them.)

I05: “Nakikipag-video call din ako with my family para connected pa rin ako sa kanila kahit papaano.” (I video call with my family to stay connected with them.)

Due to the absence of personal interaction with other people, the students see online interaction as an alternative to keep them socially active in the midst of pandemic. This proves the importance of maintaining social relationships, especially during drastic times. The social media served as an area where the students can communicate their thoughts and express their emotions to their family and friends. They also use social media features like video calls, chats, and watching movies together through a shared screen to spend quality or bonding time with their families and friends. A study found out that students reportedly use social media to compensate for a lack of social connections. It is employed in order for them to maintain social relationship and preserve their mental health (Cao et al., 2020; Ristovnik, Keržič, Ravšelj, Tomaževič, & Umek, 2020) as well as to remain connected and have social support. In fact, a study explained that digital platforms were regarded by several families as important tools in maintaining social contact (Salin, Kaittila, Hakovirta and Anttila, 2020). Moreover, an existing body of knowledge discussed the use of social media applications as spaces for social sharing of emotions to exchange feelings and critical thoughts about the Covid19 situation (Canale et al., 2020). As previously stated in this study, social relationships and engagement act as protective factor towards stress or adversity (Sippel, Pietrzak, Charney, Mayes & Southwick, 2015; Zaki & Williams, 2013). Additionally, social interaction, in particular, has been considered as critical in mitigating

the stress (e.g., academic stress) that students face (Elmer, Mepham & Stadtfeld, 2020; Stadtfeld, Vörös, Elmer, Boda & Raabe, 2018). Pandemic has caused social deprivation, however, the students continued to find ways to maintain social interaction. Due to strict prohibition on social gatherings, online method is the most possible way to make interaction happen. Consequently, the students relied on social media to sustain communication and connection with their families and friends, which assisted them in dealing with the negative experiences brought about by social deprivation.

Theme 5. Distraction Method

Diverting attention or distracting oneself emerged as one of the coping strategies employed by some students. Students reportedly engage in this method to keep themselves away from negative thoughts and feelings. This strategy is further divided into two sub themes, namely, Academic-related coping strategy and Doing household chores.

Doing Academic Works. Social deprivation caused academic challenges which became as one of the stressors of students during the pandemic. However, for some students, they cope up by keeping themselves busy in doing their academic activities. There are only few informants who revealed that they keep themselves busy in academics to cope up with the effects of social deprivation. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I19: “Busy sa acads pero most of the time po tumatawag/video call ako dito sa amin sa family ko and then nanonood ganon po as a distraction na rin po siguro.” (I am busy with my academics, but most of the time, I call or video call my family and then I also watch to distract myself.)

I20: “nag-a-acads nalang para tapusin yung mga requirements.” (I focus on academics to finish my requirements.)

Doing Household Chores. Another distraction method that some of the students adopted during the pandemic is doing their household chores. Being stuck at home, the students reportedly spend their time in doing chores to divert their attention. There are only few informants who revealed that they do household chores to cope up with the effects of social deprivation. Some of the verbalizations of the informants are as follows:

I01: “I tried many ways to divert my attention po. Naglilinis ng apartment at nag-lalaba halos every day.”

(I tried many ways to divert my attention. Cleaning apartment and washing my laundries almost every day.)

I06: “Tinutulungan ko rin po yng sister ko sa mga household chores o kaya mag-grocery or mamili ng mga kailangan sa bahay.” (I also help my sister in doing household chores or sometimes buy groceries or things that we need in our house.)

For some students they distract themselves with their academic activities and household chores in order to escape from negative feelings or thoughts. They apparently do this in order to avoid overthinking and worrying. Furthermore, they added that these also alleviate their boredom and loneliness. By engaging themselves in this coping mechanism, they also become productive in their academic domain during the course of the pandemic. As cited by Kim, Shim, Choi & Choi (2021), self-distraction, which is engaging in activities to distract oneself from stressors, has been a commonly reported response to social isolation during past epidemic outbreaks (Chan et al., 2007; Rabelo et al., 2016). In addition, self-distraction may not only reduce psychological distress, by encouraging disengagement from the negative emotions associated with stressors, but may as well help combat boredom and helplessness associated with the absence of social connection during the pandemic (Polizzi, Lynn, & Perry, 2020). In relation to doing household chores, a cross-sectional survey conducted by Serino (2021) shows that the most utilized coping mechanism for both men and women during the lockdown was engaging in household chores.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Louisiana college students acquired both positive and negative experiences with prolonged social deprivation in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been facing challenges and the lack of in-person social interaction has been affecting the psychological, social, and even academic functioning of the students. More specifically, college students appear to be disturbed and emotionally overwhelmed by their experiences which further implies of a deteriorating mental health. The findings in this study, however, indicate that the students have been employing different coping strategies such as recreational activities, academic, interpersonal, and spiritual related activities to buffer the adverse psychological effects of prolonged social deprivation. Interestingly, maintaining and even enhancing social connections with friends, classmates, and family members through social media engagement

(e.g. Facebook messenger) has been significantly utilized as a way to compensate for the lack of in-person social interaction. Students are expected to be at a developmental stage where they can easily cope with the demands of a complex, global, technological, and rapidly evolving environment with their thinking abilities, relationship skills, and ability to control emotions. Consistently, it was revealed in this study that college students have the ability to cope easily with this type of environment, particularly in this time of pandemic where all ages struggle with their everyday lives. Though the students have been utilizing these coping strategies to effectively manage the negative effects, healthcare professionals, educational institutions, the parents, and even the students themselves, must collaboratively work on a comprehensive way to address and eventually, overcome the negative impacts of prolonged social deprivation as well as the pandemic.

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