



UNIVERSITY *of the* WESTERN CAPE

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FINAL REPORT 2022

Project: Mental health impact of COVID-19 on university students at UWC and MU

Collaborators:
Prof. Anita Padmanabhanunni (UWC)
Prof. Kristen Hawley (UM)

29th December 2022

Dear Prof. Umhoff,

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of UMSAEP. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not travel between UWC and MU. Instead, we completed a two-site study. Herewith, our final report.

Our project focused on the mental health impact of COVID-19 on university students at UWC and MU respectively. Prof Padmanabhanunni generated an online survey covering a range of items regarding knowledge of the COVID-19 virus as well as socioemotional functioning for administration to both UWC and MU students.

Prof Padmanabhanunni acquired ethical clearance for the project focusing exclusively on UWC students on 1st June 2020. This original project formed part of a collaboration with staff members in the Psychology Department and preceded UMSAEP. The survey was distributed via email to the student population beginning June 2020 and collection at UWC was completed in 2020. There were 341 responses.

Ethical clearance at MU required a separate application and review. Prof Hawley received ethical clearance in February 2021. She distributed the survey to MU students through the campus-wide MU Info email advertisement in March 2021. We had limited student responses so we re-posted through the MU Info Ad system monthly through December 2021. We had a total of 68 responses. The more limited student responses to the survey at MU is disappointing and may have stemmed from the lack of an incentive for survey completion. In order to make data collection practices parallel to those at UWC, we opted not to offer an incentive to MU students for survey completion. However, it is possible that this decision led to a low response rate because MU has multiple paid research studies open for student participation throughout the year. Indeed, a research study with no incentive (e.g., course credit; money) is unusual for students attending MU.

Anita Padmanabhanunni published the following papers from the UWC data collected in 2020:

Padmanabhanunni, A. (2022). Psychological distress in the time of COVID-19: The relationship between anxiety, hopelessness, and depression and the mediating role of sense of coherence. *Traumatology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/trm0000380>

Padmanabhanunni, A & Pretorius, T. (2021). The Unbearable Loneliness of COVID-19: COVID-19 Related Correlates of Loneliness in South Africa. *Psychiatry Research*, 296, 113658.



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Please let us know if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anita Padmanabhanunni', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Anita Padmanabhanunni
Kristin Hawley