

Health, Well-Being, and Quality of Life After COVID-19: A Mixed-Methods Study

Lia McLoughlin¹, Catherine Cavaliere, PhD, OTR¹, Michael Pizzi², Lindsey Curtin, Angela Butler, Nicole Weick, Christopher Gray

¹Dominican College, Orangeburg, New York, United States; ²New York Institute of Technology, Blauvelt, NY, USA

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Primary Author and Speaker: Lia McLoughlin, lgirl178@yahoo.com

PURPOSE: Research has indicated that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on the health of its survivors (Zhang & Feei Ma, 2020). However, research is limited on the impacts of COVID-19 in the areas of mental health, well-being, and quality of life (QoL). The purpose of this study was to analyze the impacts that COVID-19 had on the perceived health, well-being, and QoL of survivors as compared to those who did not contract COVID-19. The researchers sought to answer the following research question: is there a difference in the perceived health, well-being, and QoL of COVID-19 survivors as compared to those who have not contracted COVID-19? It was hypothesized that survivors will perceive health, well-being, and QoL differently than those who did not contract COVID-19.

DESIGN: This study was a convergent, mixed-methods design that had an experimental group of survivors of COVID-19 (n = 20) and a control group of those who did not contract COVID-19 (n = 21). The sample was recruited through convenience sampling. Method Each participant was sent the Pizzi Health and Wellness Assessment (PHWA), the Short Form-36 (SF-36), and a demographic form via email to fill out and send back. A Mann-Whitney U was used to analyze differences between groups on the PHWA, and a t-test was used to analyze differences between groups on the SF-36. Qualitative data were coded and themed to uncover perceptions of both groups regarding health, well-being, and QoL. A Bonferroni correction was done to ensure that the quantitative results reflected true differences. Further, researchers completed member checking and peer debriefing to enhance trustworthiness of the qualitative data.

RESULTS: After the Bonferroni correction, all p-values from the quantitative data were above the alpha of 0.1, indicating no significant differences between groups. The qualitative data revealed various themes in the areas of mental, physical, and social health. The similar themes among groups included increased anxiety, increased depression, increased job stress, increased fatigue, and family participation. COVID-19 survivors differed from those who did not contract the virus in that social participation and exercise were impacted more in this group. The quantitative data did not support the hypothesis.

CONCLUSION: The findings indicate that survivors of the virus as well as persons who did not contract the virus had similar health impacts, apart from physical health and exercise. This suggests that the pandemic-related impacts such as social distancing, gym closures, and a decrease in accessibility to mental health resources may have led to many of the impacts in perceived health rather than COVID-19 itself. Due to the unique understanding that occupational therapists have of meaningful occupations and their impact on mental health and wellness, occupational therapists may adopt a new role in community health promotion. This may include adopting strategies from the Recovery Framework as well as offering mental health services in the community post-pandemic to allow communities to rebuild from an occupational justice perspective.

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