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## COVID-19 student mental health check

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### Recommended Citation

Blankenship, D., & Jones, I. S. (2021). COVID-19 student mental health check. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 39, 15.

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## COVID-19 student mental health check

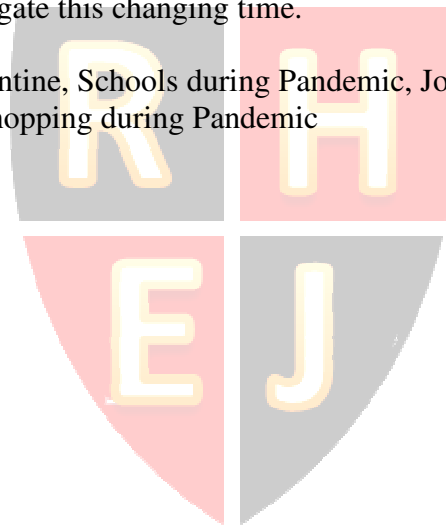
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### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced many changes in the lives of our students and families. In this article, the responses of students in criminal justice classes at a Hispanic serving institution in south Texas were collected and synthesized. The 252 responses were divided into seven frequently observed and repeated themes: jobs and job related, school and courses, graduation, routine, family, positivity, and groceries/shopping. Findings for this time period matched what much of what the national and international news and reports have all reported. It indicates that, as teaching professionals, we must be mindful to provide the added support to assist our students as they navigate this changing time.

Keywords: COVID-19, Quarantine, Schools during Pandemic, Jobs during Pandemic, Family during Pandemic, Groceries/Shopping during Pandemic



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## COVID-19 student mental health check

The COVID-19 pandemic and its requisite sheltering in place during the Spring 2020 semester affected faculty and students. One of the discussion board assignments in April was to get a mental health check on how students were dealing with the pandemic and what were their concerns. The optional Discussion Board thread to which students responded read as follows:

As we near the end of this semester, each one of us has been greatly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and the necessary changes in our everyday lives. Although you signed up for an online course and were familiar with the online learning environment, you didn't expect to have your life disrupted by the shelter-in-place requirements. So, please take a few minutes between now and April 29th to share how you have been affected by the coronavirus this semester and how you coped with all the necessary changes. Although there is no minimum character requirement, you do need to reply to at least two other classmates. Hopefully, we can learn from one another, take comfort from our shared struggles, and look forward to a better and healthier future.

In these courses, students had to respond to the thread posted by the instructor with a minimum of 200 words and had to respond to two of their peers' postings. Eighty-four students enrolled in online freshman and sophomore Criminal Justice courses at a southern Texas university responded to this discussion board. The 252 responses were divided into seven frequently observed and repeated themes: Jobs and job related, School and courses, Graduation, Routine, Family, Positivity, and Shopping. We have selected those responses that best represent the overall pulse of the students but did not correct grammatical and mechanical errors.

### Theme 1: Jobs and Job Related

This section about jobs and job-related concerns was foremost on students minds this semester. Students responded here they were concerned because they have been let go from their jobs, were concerned when they had to work more and closer with the public and were concerned because the pandemic affected their ability to make a living. Each entry represents one student's response to either the original thread or a student's response to the other student's original post.

At the start of the pandemic I was laid off from an analytics firm in Austin, nevertheless I am happy to be home and not be in a position of struggle or worry. I'm also happy to be home because I get to help my parents and grandparents with groceries, prescriptions and other general errands. Limiting their exposure is key so I don't mind.

The COVID-19 virus has greatly impacted not only my life but everyone's life around the world. My family is fortunate enough to be able to continue working because my parents are teachers however it changed our day to day life drastically relating to how our schedules plan out.

I recently have been placed on furlough at the hospital I work at. I'm not sure if everyone is aware but even essential workers are being affected by the pandemic taking place. 100+ workers were placed on leave without pay until June or until the situation is cleared. For me, this is good and bad because I protect myself from the exposure of potentially sick patients who enter the hospital but then I am also in a financial burden. I am in hopes that applying for unemployment will help me.

I am a part-time employee for Panda Express and for whatever reason our workload has been insane; we have served up to 600 cars per day (just drive thru) where our total number of cars used to be MAX 300. I've had multiple mental breakdowns this season and have wanted to quit so many times. However, I am learning to be appreciative of still having a job because I understand that there are many unfortunate people unemployed out there due to this virus and it's something no person should be going through.

I work at a vet clinic, so I am considered essential, but that has been so hard as well. We see almost about 200 hundred people every day for non-emergency cases, and it is very frustrating seeing people out and about, exposing us workers for something that can wait. I don't know, I may be very angry about this entire situation because I have personally dealt with a family member having the virus and it is a very scary situation that people need to take seriously.

I am a waitress and everything was moved to curbside/to-go so business wasn't the same at all which affected my paycheck but I still am glad to at least be able to work since I know many people got laid off.

I understand where you are coming from because both of my parents are medical professionals, considered essential, they risk their health every day by encountering many people because their job requires them to do so. Overall, this is a very unfortunate situation that will hopefully pass soon.

I now work part time. I have never worked part time. I work an average of 25-30 hours a week now. My mother is now living with me. I do not feel comfortable allowing my daughter to go to daycare, so she takes care of her while I work.

My job allowed me to take my work computer home and work remotely. Since then, I have not had to drive to work each day, have not had to use the same amount of resources in preparing for work and commuting, and I have not had to endure the gross conditions at my workplace. I will refrain from disclosing where I work, but I will say that it is a call center with some major sanitation issues. Plus, since I started working from home, I have been able to accomplish so much more during the day. I sincerely hope this arrangement continues, even after COVID-19 is abated. It really shows how much extra effort daily was not really needed.

Many have been laid off, unable make ends-meet, or had other sorts of difficulties due to COVID-19 and its impact on society. A friend of mine, Matt, was laid off his job as an HVAC worker. Fortunately, he lives with his parents and this has not put him in financial jeopardy. Moreover, the "shelter-in-place" order has made obtaining essential items somewhat difficult.

I started to get more due dates on my activities from every class and started to stress out. I had to calm down myself, because it was something that no one was conscious about this huge pandemic. I got to concentrate more on my classes and getting everything done on my time, sending mails to my professor of the next steps.

I was laid off work a bit prior to the shelter-in-place requirements, I have been looking for work ever since and now it had become more difficult to find a job when no one is hiring. It has been difficult, financially. Social media has really made our community go paranoid, in my opinion. It is important to take this virus seriously, but some individuals blow it way out of proportion.

The coronavirus has not affected my life as much as it did everyone else. My daily life used to consist of working and doing online school. I work full time, so I was always used to being at work or at home on my laptop. Now I spend more time at home since they're cutting everyone's hours which is odd but nothing out of the norm. Going out really isn't in my routine anymore, I try to avoid it as much as possible especially since wearing a face mask is so uncomfortable. I don't know what the best way to cope with this is, but I hope you all stay safe and well.

Luckily, I'm still working, but my family members like my dad and brother have lost their job for the mean time because of the virus. This has affected our income and payments. Hard times for all of us, but we can get through this like we have before. Our generation is strong and motivated to make things better. Stay safe and thanks for sharing.

I have been affected by COVID-19 by losing my job and not being able to see family and friends. Also not being about to attend my other classes in person has made it difficult for me to have all of them on learn because I like being hands on. The way I have been dealing with these issues is by keeping myself busy outside. I have started growing vegetables, started fixing and building chicken coops. Also giving me more time to study for class and the many thing I do to cope with this difficult time is by praying and having faith that we will get through this.

Although five out of six of my courses this semester were originally online, I still had to make some adjustments in my classes. I was taking a capstone course on campus with Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ and I really enjoyed going to class to discuss that week's readings, and after COVID our class moved to online. I preferred going to class

and discussing the readings because it gave me a better understanding of the course material. After the change, we just wrote our assignments and emailed them to him to submit them, so there were no more discussions. I feel like after the whole shelter in place started, I had a harder time keeping up with my assignments just because of anxiety and my boyfriend being home all day since he was laid off from his job

Where to start, I am thankful for still being able to go to work and be able to get the necessities my family needs. My job is not the greatest but it's essential, my wife got temporarily laid off from her job so I am covering the bills which I am thankful that I am able to because without my job would have been a little hard to pay all the bills. I must travel for work and since this epidemic started, I have been working more than ever, not only to secure my position but make sure I'll be making enough to cover everything that's essential. I have been spending a lot of time away from home, but the family understands. On a less serious basis, I need a haircut bad because I am starting to look like wolverine and it sucks being stuck at home all day when I am in town. Until all this blows over, I wouldn't risk my family for any reason.

I believe that this pandemic has affected all of us in certain ways. For me, it has been difficult to go to work (Walmart) and once I arrived home, I need to take preventive precautions because I have kids. These precautions include sanitizing my keys, wallet, phone and entering thru the garage because the first room is the bathroom and I take a shower. Another problem I have faced with this pandemic is that since I work on the first shift, I need to be there before 4 am and I have been stopped several times by police officers.

In all honesty, I did not expect this semester to turn out like this. I don't think anyone did. Because I work at HEB and am considered an essential worker, my hours were raised, and I was needed at work at least 6 days out of the week. This left me little time to be with my family and schoolwork. I went from working 6 hour shifts to 9-hour shifts, and when I got home, my family made me leave all my uniform outside and change into a robe to walk through the house. I need to take a shower as soon as I get home. Because the virus is asymptomatic, an individual might not know they have it. Every time I go to work, I tell myself that any one of our customers could be the one that gets me sick, so I am still trying to overcome that fear so I can breathe a little more just doing mommy duties.

Our students are reacting exactly how millions of people around the world are reacting. No matter where you are in the world, economies are all experiencing similar signs as many people are laid off because of COVID-19. David Blustein, a professor of counseling psychology at Boston College and author of *The Importance of Work in an Age of Uncertainty: The Eroding Work Experience in America*, calls the time we are living in as a "global pandemic of unemployment" (Fowler, 2020).

Additionally, to make matters even worse was the rapidity where many unexpectedly discovered themselves without work – either laid off with some form of closure distribution, asked to take indefinite unpaid leave, or out-and-out dismissed. This is, of course, a financial challenge for many who have suddenly lost their income, but it also presents a psychological challenge. Psychologists remark that losing a job often equates to the grief of losing a loved one; the emotive path can include any or all the stages of grief, which run from shock and denial, through to anger and bargaining, and eventually to acceptance and hope (Fowler, 2020).

In general, after any loss, people should distinguish which components of their situation they are able to control and which they cannot control – and focus on those parts they can control. Recognizing urgent cutbacks such as reducing spending and putting some solutions in place to help, and recognizing that, in the short term, things will be difficult and alternatives will be needed until the pandemic resolves (Benson, 2020).

## **Theme II: School and Courses**

The second theme that many students indicated was concerning is their school and how their courses had changed virtually overnight from being offered face-to-face to online. As can be seen from the following responses, reactions were emotional and varied.

Like many of you I did not feel a significant change academically. All my classes are online, and it was something I was already prepared for. I was not prepared for the one-week delay (extension of Spring Break) for half of my classes you cannot move ahead, and the work opens when the week begins. I was incredibly swamped for a few weeks doing 2x the work in one week and doubling up on assignments. It was challenging to say the least.

Moreover, it was also very different attending my physical classes online and having to adjust to laboratory lectures and harder lectures remotely. COVID-19 also affected my social life in how I was not able to talk to my friends and meet up with them in person. Ultimately, while my complaints seem minuscule compared to those who have lost loved ones and jobs, I can only hope that this situation ends soon for the sake of all humanity.

When we started this semester, we thought it was going to be like any other. Some of us were excited about graduating this semester. We never thought the country would face a pandemic like this one and how hard it would hit us. Therefore, the school had to be moved 100% online, which would be harder for most of us. Not everyone has a computer or printer, so they had a lot of trouble with school.

The COVID-19 Pandemic is a something that has slowly taken its toll on me. I have been enrolled at UTRGV since 2018. Most of my classes have been online, so I thought it was not going to affect me school wise; however, that was not the case. I work full time and attend school full time. I would gradually disappear to the beach or to the movies to get away from both. Those were literally my only



hobbies. Since the governor's orders came into effect, I have been stuck at home with no way of de-stressing. I believe they call it cabin fever.

This semester started off as one of the most difficult semesters I'd be having, as it was my last semester before my graduation. However, this semester proved to be even more difficult as the COVID-19 came to surface. I suddenly had to move to all classes online, and apparently some Professors thought that they also had to be forced to make their classes even more tedious with an extra amount of workload (due to us not attending class in person) as if it was our fault. Some professors however were understanding and even offered extra credit with every assignment and understood that everything had turned much more difficult and stressful for us.

It is very frustrating that my other classes were put online, and professors took it upon themselves to make the classes even harder just because they were in an online setting. Students and many others now must deal with the stress of classes on top of people literally testing positive and dying every day.

Although this was the only online class I had planned to take, the moment everything was turned upside down and was rearranged, I had trouble getting used to it, mainly because I had certain classes that I decided to take on campus specifically because I believed that said courses would be a lot easier to understand since I would be learning in a face-to-face environment.

Having one 2 online classes turn into five did become a little stressful for me and I struggled to find motivation to do all the work I needed to do. I'm a huge procrastinator so it didn't really help much but in the end, I got through it.

The transition to having only one online class to all my classes being online has been stressful, but thankfully I was able to get through it this Spring semester. This pandemic has brought me and my family closer as we now spend every day with each other. Many people would complain about not having time so even though the pandemic is bad, look on the positive side and see that you now have the time to spend with your family and rest.

I would like to say thank you so much for all the help you have provided with assigning extra credit assignments to help with our grades. I am very appreciative of all the supportive emails you sent during this crisis. Although I was already taking this course online, the coronavirus did affect my family and me. I have a full-time job, 3 kids (11, 4, 6-months), and I am taking six classes this semester. It has been a challenge; the kids see me home and think that I off when I am working and can't give them all the attention they require. I have had to juggle from completing my work tasks and helping my children with their schoolwork. After I clock out, I cook dinner, then get back on the computer to do my schoolwork. I feel like I am stuck in front of the computer all day without a break. I am happy that this semester is almost over so I can spend more time with my



husband and children. The good thing is that they understand that we cannot go anywhere, and we have tried to keep them entertained with board games on the weekends.

Even before this COVID-19 pandemic, education was already undergoing a transformation. Technology was being used to assist student learning with tutorials, videos and other resources for the classroom. The pandemic just hastened transition from a “teaching culture to a learning culture” (Geoff, 2020). Within a very short period, all institutions of learning had to put into place a technology plan that allowed students to electronically continue their education. This posed some concerns for faculty with little or no training for online delivery, and for students lacking computers and other technology to be able to join the rush to digital learning. The concerns didn’t stop with the technology, but with the realization that many individuals lost their jobs, and now also had to become teachers to their children so that they would not fall behind in their learning. Time became equally valuable as a resource to be able to attend to all the responsibilities parents had to undertake.

### **Theme III: Graduation**

For some, graduation is a milestone that marks the end of a chapter. For others, it's symbolic of everything they've overcome. But this year, with the COVID-19 pandemic, graduation was very different than what was expected. The virtual graduations or the drive-by graduations, although happy that they were acknowledged, was not the same for students completing a large milestone in their lives. Here are some of the responses to the third most often voiced themes in this discussion board.

I am so glad the semester is almost over. I was supposed to walk [at graduation] this May and although I am bit disappointed especially because this time a year ago, I was 3yrs from meeting degree requirement. I am happy to be healthy and around family. I see no point in dwelling in things I have no control over.

I lost my job because of the pandemic and my whole life went upside down. I'm still having trouble getting everything together with school, financially and emotionally. One of the things that hurt the most is that I was going to graduate this year and I was looking forward to the ceremony since I'm the first generation of my family to graduate from a University. It has been a challenge I can't deny but we are almost at the finish line, two more weeks and the spring semester will be finally over. Some of us will still struggle without jobs but school assignments out of our priorities, would relax us a bit.

The graduation that I've worked so hard for has been postponed till later time and who knows if by the time it will happen, one will be able to drop their career to come walk [across the stage]. This whole situation is heartbreaking, but I pray that everyone in this course including their loved ones stay safe and find their way out of this difficult time.

I can understand how disheartening it is to not have a graduation ceremony. My son is a senior in high school and my wife, and I are saddened that our son will not have a normal ceremony. It will be virtual, but still, it is not the same. I do want to congratulate you on your discipline and hard work in being the first in your family to graduate from college. You are an inspiration and role model to your younger family members. Your parents must be very proud.

Another way the pandemic has affected me personally is that I will not be able to walk the stage [for graduation] this spring as I had planned. This is a big deal to me because I have never walked the stage before in my life, and now at 45 I was going to be able to. In high school, I ended up getting a GED and for my Associates I opted not to walk as I wanted to save it for my undergrad. I know we will most likely have a virtual graduation and I will probably walk the stage in the fall ceremony, but it will be bittersweet. I know in the grand scheme of things this is minor but that is my story. I hope that my fellow classmates and instructor are hanging in there and it hasn't been too bad for them.

There have been some difficulties adjusting to all the changes we are experiencing during this COVID-19 pandemic, but overall, I am doing okay. I think the biggest thing I had to cope with is not being able to participate in a graduation ceremony for graduation. I was really looking forward to graduation because I finally came back to finish school after dropping out almost 5 years ago and was going to surprise my parents with the graduation tickets, but due to COVID-19 it was postponed so that will have to wait. I guess I'll just have to keep my degree a secret from them for a little longer than expected until the pandemic is over.

“Graduating in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic will have enduring implications on the Class of 2020: for their memories, their earning power, and their view of what it means to have a functional society. For these young adults, the pandemic represents not just a national crisis but also a defining moment” (Alter, 2020). Graduation may be thought of as leaving childhood behind and starting a new life into adulthood and responsibilities with the opportunity to begin afresh. This year this new beginning wasn't felt by many students as most were forced to leave school and their supportive group of friends to return home with their parents to finish out the semester. Although digital and drive-by graduation experiences occurred, what students had been looking forward to happening, that momentous walk across the stage holding their degree, did not happen. Many were disappointed and experienced grieving.

#### **Theme IV: Routine**

Another theme that was noted in this discussion board was how students were coping with the difficult or boring routine of everyday life of sheltering in place. To help offset the negative effects of a quarantine situation, keeping a daily schedule and an emotions and activity tracker can help foster motivation, reduce stress, and may act as an anchor in helping to re-center

individuals. There is much research reinforcing the positive effects of having a daily routine, which is perhaps even more important now during a self-isolation period (Tanasugarn, 2020).

Yeah, I with you, I am bit tired of being home. I am so happy I have a yard and some space to run around and play with my dog. I am also trying my best to stick to a routine. Waking up at 7am, exercising, making breakfast, etc. I understand it's tough.

I also am experiencing cabin fever and higher than normal migraines because of all the screens I've been exposing myself to. I make sure to go outside everyday but it just isn't the same.

I find it really amazing how you could manage such a busy schedule and still be successful in your hectic tasks. I have a 7-month old baby and she starting to crawl and wanting to be all over the place. Having to be watching over her while doing homework is a bit challenging for me; can't imagine homeschooling and doing my own work as well.

I really miss working out and need to get back in shape soon. I'm hoping to go fishing soon as I have been waiting for a while to get the chance. Also, I very much agree with what you said about people arguing with others about the virus and social distancing. I've seen people attack others for going out to fish by themselves or with others but still following the rules that were made. It upsets me that people can be like that and I find those people to be quite annoying. I hope everything gets better soon or at least starts to as I kind of miss being around people even though I hate it most of the time.

This has been challenging from having an already hectic schedule with kids, school, and work, the transition, although rough, was done. Having to do homeschooling and become a teacher for my kids has been interesting. The best thing I can do is lead by example and I am proud of my kids for being able to now continue to do their schoolwork as they have seen me do mine.

I've also found myself filling my time, in probably not the most productive ways, like lying in bed all day watching Netflix, lol; but hopefully we can all get back into our grind once things settle down. Hope you're doing well and staying safe! The past month I have been at home with my husband. Since March 21st we've only left the house to do grocery shopping and to pick up food. We do live in Mexico so things aren't as things strict as in United States even though I think they should be setting more rules in place to help stop the spread. I don't know how I've managed not to leave the house and be with my husband 24/7, this is something so new to us. Before all this I was traveling back and forth a lot from Mexico to the valley, so this has put me on pause for a second, but I'm not mad at it considering we just moved into a new place. I'm really taking advantage of this time to organize, clean and catch up with school. Two bad habits I've picked up this past month is sleeping in and playing Loteria. I've been playing and luckily,

I've been winning and won over \$800, but I told myself once all this is over, I have got to stop.

Since the coronavirus a lot has changed. Life as we know it has had a drastic change, some of it for better and some of it for the worse. By better, I mean that we gave the environment a break. Seeing the news and how nature has restored itself. In Italy, they got clear waters, dolphins moved back in, in another part of the world, the sea was illuminated, which I have never seen from any sea/beach. The world has healed from all the toxicity we were giving it. Aside from that, our daily routine, my routine has changed drastically. My campus classes have gone viral, there's no place to go out on the weekends, my gym routine has also changed into home workouts, that's what my daily routine has come to. As far as how am I coping with this new lifestyle? Try to keep myself occupied as much as I can, with work, assignments and chores that need attending to around the house. Video games have also turned into a big plus and escape from reality.

The COVID-19 have affected me in different ways, but most specially in the financial matter. I provide for myself and in my work, my hours got cut in half (still thankful that I have a job). It is hard to try to stay clean and disinfected for those like us that go outside almost every day of the week. To disinfect myself when I get home from work, I put alcohol in a spray bottle and I spray my shoes, then I go directly to take a shower. I disinfect my phone and my keys and the outside of my purse. I put my dirty clothes in a basket that is only for my dirty clothes. When going outside I wear gloves and mask. I disinfect my mask with alcohol after each use.

Everyone has been affected by the virus in one way or another. It changed our way of living so rapidly. The way it has affected me is a lot like other people. Staying at home is not as easy as it sounds. I'm so used to always doing something and being stuck at home has been hard on me. I have found ways of keeping busy such as doing improvements at home and doing schoolwork. Although this has been hard on people, I feel staying in has really helped reduce new cases of the virus.

We humans are creatures of habit and our daily routines create structure, provide a sense of accomplishment, let us know how we are doing, and also let people around us know how we are doing (Ginsberg, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic and its mandatory quarantines replaced our daily schedule with strong emotions, discomfort, fear, "uncertainty and a lack of structure that can contribute to stress, anxiety and even clinical depression" (Solhkhah, as quoted in Ginsberg, 2020).

### **Theme V: Family**

Typically, families enjoy spending time at home on the weekends to get projects done, spend time with family and complete enjoyable outings together. During this pandemic,

however, so much time together isn't necessarily ideal, especially when parents are working from home full-time or are essential workers who still must leave their house for work.

"For parents, creating a consistent family strategy is essential as children look for structure. Families are a primary source of companionship and gratification. Now more than ever, families are the primary pillar of support as people are instructed to 'go home and stay home'" (Trussell, 2020).

Another way that I have been affected is that I have not been able to see my family. My parents live in Starr County and exposing ourselves to them at their age puts them at risk. I have been fortunate enough to keep my position at my place of employment, but that too may soon be at risk. I hope this pandemic ends soon.

I had a family member who tested positive for the virus, an 8-month-old baby. Luckily she fully recovered, but during that time it was very emotional and hard to be going through this pandemic while having a paper due the next day like if we have all the time in the world and no other priorities to take care of.

The main way that the shelter-in-place affected me personally is how to deal with the increased anxiety faced by my family. We are good in that we have not been short of food or funds. However, as a father of three, my wife and I have had lengthy conversations with our sons and daughter about how this situation is affecting politics, science, and economics. We have had to make sure that they do not get overly anxious about what is happening. As a result, we watch less news, do yard work, take walks with our dogs, exercise, cook and bake, and pray together. As parents, we want to find the good and do good in this most unprecedented situation.

Despite this craziness, I am grateful that I get to spend quality time with my family and to see my sister's stomach grow as she carries my very first niece!! I've learned to be grateful for the little things in life that we take for granted. The virus has both positively and negatively impacted my life and routine. For all the negative things going on, there has been some good things that have happened as a result. For example, I may have lost my job and am not getting paid right now, but now I can be around my family a lot more and enjoy their company. This has totally affected our daily lives. Having a four-year-old at home makes it harder because the usual runs to the store can no longer happen and arrangements must be made. Having to teach my four-year-old at home, take care of my courses online and my work online as well can be challenging. The little things that we take for granted are things that we cannot just get up and do right now.

I went from already lacking sleep and crazy sleep schedules to now almost no sleep, 2-3 hrs. at the most and a full schedule. Checking on friends just in case they are down especially those who are alone with no family. It's been a level I never thought we'd be going through. All I can say is take it one day at a time.

And change, although it may be different, is an easy way to adapt to a hard transition if we learn from each other how to do so. I hope no matter what everyone can look past this and realize this is strength we never knew we had. This too shall pass.

Managing child-care responsibilities, coping with job loss or financial instability, caring for sick or at-risk family members, and keeping up with schoolwork added to student stress levels during the semester. These concerns are in line with the observations of Patrick, et al (2020), “Families with dependent children are likely to be adversely affected by the financial, emotional and physical implications of the pandemic and resultant lockdown.”

### **Theme VI: Positivity**

While it has been difficult to stay positive during the coronavirus, focusing on the positive as you think about others provides the necessary energy and resolve needed to weather the storm (Arruda, 2020). Here are a couple of positive thoughts submitted.

Unfortunately, many people are going through difficulties, but I think it's great that you are taking some positives out of it. There are some things that we don't have control over and it's easy to get wrapped up in it.

Yes, adjusting is hard but the good thing is that we have learned to adjust and move forward and just take the proper precautions. We need to make sure that we are safe to keep our families safe.

### **Theme VII: Shopping/Groceries**

As grocery shopping went from routine to risky, it also became a stressful experience because of product shortages and concerns about cleanliness. We made fewer impulse purchases and tried to plan ahead of time what we were going to purchase so as to spend less in the store (Maldonado, 2020). Shelves nearly empty of toilet paper, paper towels, bleach, cleaning supplies, and many grocery staples increased our anxiety. Here are some of the concerns about this shopping/groceries theme.

Things have changed in every way. Our grocery runs happen once a week only. We make a list of what we need, and whatever we happen to run out of during the week, must wait until the weekend.

However, I think that grocery shopping once a week is a much more reasonable approach. My wife and I have always done that (just due to my meticulous nature). Hopefully more people will start to take this more sensible approach, as the local HEBs are usually overcrowded, even before COVID-19.

I miss shopping even though I hate it, eating at a restaurant even though I hated when it was full of people, going to the movies, walking at the park. I miss many



things that the virus took away from me temporarily. It is important to keep our heads high and have hope that it'll end very soon.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected most if not all Americans. For me, it has been very difficult to manage my time because although I am still considered an essential employee and have not lost my job like many others, there are so many restrictions and limitations that prevent me from continuing my already established system. For example, the excessive lines to purchase essential items has impacted my time management regarding homework and duties at home. In addition, there are many times that compulsive buying from other customers prevents me from purchasing items for my daily needs. This adds to more stress because I must go to various stores, all with their own wait lines, just to be able to purchase a couple of items. Unfortunately, but thankfully, I have been able to get necessary items and services in Mexico. I know that my situation is not as difficult as others but I'm sure that this pandemic has affected everyone in one way or another.

The way that corona virus affected my family and I, is not having enough resources for regular necessities that we usually need. We were close to running out of toilet paper, but thankfully we were able to find some thanks to my mom. I live only with my grandma, so it's harder on her because she's not able to go out during this time. I go to the store whenever she needs something, and try to do my best for her, when I am not at work. It's a little hard, because I work during this time, and it's a bit scary not knowing who has the virus, but thankfully we wear gloves and masks to help prevent it.

Shopping online, curbside pickup, and grocery delivery has become more popular as we seek to stay safe and avoid our local grocery store with its one-way aisles, socially distant checkout lines, plexiglass screens, and contactless payment (Maldonado, 2020). Families now have to schedule their trips to the stores and have limited their purchasing to once a week. Although items that were scarce are increasing in supply now, there are still items that are not as plentiful. Welcome to the new way of doing everything.

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