

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures on eating disorder risk and emotional distress among adolescents and young people in Spain

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Helena Vall-Roqué¹, Ana Andrés², and Carmina Saldaña¹

¹*University of Barcelona;* ²*Ramon Llull University (Spain)*

This cross-sectional study aimed to determine the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on emotional distress and disordered eating in a community sample of Spanish youngsters. A total of 2847 participants (95% women; aged 14-35) completed depression, anxiety, stress, self-esteem, and disordered eating measures. Given the small proportion of men and as significant differences were found between genders in several variables, most results were only reported for women. Severe levels of depression, anxiety and stress were found in 30.8%, 25.4% and 20.5% of the sample, respectively. Sleep quality, eating habits, appearance concerns, preoccupation about one's future, health concerns and other life domains were also affected by lockdown. Younger age, being single, being unemployed, not having contracted COVID-19 or not being sure about it, having a loved one infected or deceased due to coronavirus, and not having a place to relax at home were significantly associated with psychological distress and disordered eating. A structural equation model confirmed the direct influence of lockdown-related variables into psychopathology symptoms. The findings of this study suggest that COVID-19 and its associated lockdown might have a significant effect on psychological wellbeing and eating disturbances.