

Depression among Health Care Students in the Time of COVID-19: The Mediating Role of Resilience in the Hopelessness–Depression Relationship

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 spread rapidly across the world, and by March 2020, the first case of COVID-19 was identified in South Africa. Lockdown-related measures such as restricted movement and isolation were implemented to contain the virus. Combined with these measures, factors such as economic decline, job losses, and food shortages can cause numerous mental health sequelae such as depression. Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness as well as cases of suicide have been reported around the world due to the pandemic and the associated feelings of anxiety and depression. The aims of this study were to investigate levels of hopelessness and depression in a sample of health care students. A random sample of students ($N = 174$) enrolled in a health sciences programme at the University of the Western Cape completed the Beck Hopelessness Scale, the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale, and a three-item Resilience Scale. The results revealed high levels of hopelessness and depression compared to previously reported normative data for these scales. In addition, the indirect effects of hopelessness on depression were significant, demonstrating the mediating role of resilience in the hopelessness–depression relationship. These results highlight a call for universities to take proactive measures in providing students with free and easily accessible resources to help them cope and manage stress during a traumatic event. More importantly, at a national level, preventive measures should be implemented to strengthen resilience in young adults.

Keywords: COVID-19, Depression, Hopelessness, Mediating, Resilience

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