

The Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the Mental Health Outcomes of Community College Students in NYC Tri-State Area



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Introduction

Community college students are a vulnerable population who may be more adversely affected by COVID-19 than their four-year and college and university counterparts. Yet often invisible in public health in overlooked in studies of U.S. college population. The aim of this study is to better understand the needs of this population. To increase our understanding of the psychosocial needs of community college students in the current covid-19 era.

To explore the mental health outcomes (anxiety, stress, and depression) of students during the COVID-19 pandemic (April 2020 – April 2021).

Background

Research shows that there has always been challenges due to homesickness, academic expectations, roommate problems, etc. But since the pandemic hit, young adults, many of them community college students, have reported increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, stress, and loneliness. (Devi, et. al, 2021)

Between April and June, when the coronavirus first started to spread, rates of anxiety and depression increased substantially across the U.S., with 41% of adults reporting at least one adverse behavioral or mental health condition by the end of June.(Devi ,et. al, 2021)

Depression and stress factors include students who have low- wages, or no income and struggle with the ability to provide basic essential needs. These students are experience more hardship both academically and financially. (Rubenstein, et al, 2020 0

Enrollment was down 5% in the summer 2020 amongst community college students. Mostly seen in black & white students. Older students who have more financially responsibility are found to be more affected than younger students. (NSF, 2020)

Not all students can afford computers, or laptops. The researchers found that reliable internet services are very expensive. It suggests that students from Low SES backgrounds may experience deleterious mental health outcomes. (Devi, et. al, 2021)

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According to recent reports, City University of New York suffered 38 faculty deaths in its system during the pandemic. Losing faculty will have a huge impact on CUNY students. A recent news reports that The CUNY school higher education system has been the most affected with cases and death. (Valbrun, June 2020)

The state funding cuts to CUNY could be as high as \$95 million, and Mayor Bill de Blasio has announced \$20 million in midyear funding cuts to the system. The jobs of 12,000 faculty are in jeopardy. This has caused an increase in student tuition up to \$500. (Valbrun, June 2020)

Methodology

Procedure: We used the snowball sampling technique to collect data using survey design. The survey was self-paced and it was digitally online via google forms assessment feature. Participants was recruited from class rosters from Spring 2020 classes and from students currently enrolled in Summer 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021. Recruitment strategies included an invitational flier and blackboard communication, email, and faculty announcements in classes. Students were provided a consent form prior to the beginning of the study and a description of the study’s purpose. Students self-selected to participate. A link was provided to students to access the survey tool. After the completion of the survey, participants were provided with a list of social services, mental health services, and local COVID-19 testing centers. Students completed a consent document prior to the administration of the study.

Participants: Participants included community college students from STCC in Springfield, MA and BMCC in NYC, NY. Students 18 years of age or older participated in the study. Due to the sensitive nature of the study and increases in stress, job loss, growing mental health concerns, increased substance use, and domestic violence due to COVID-19 and the impact of social distancing, minors where omitted.

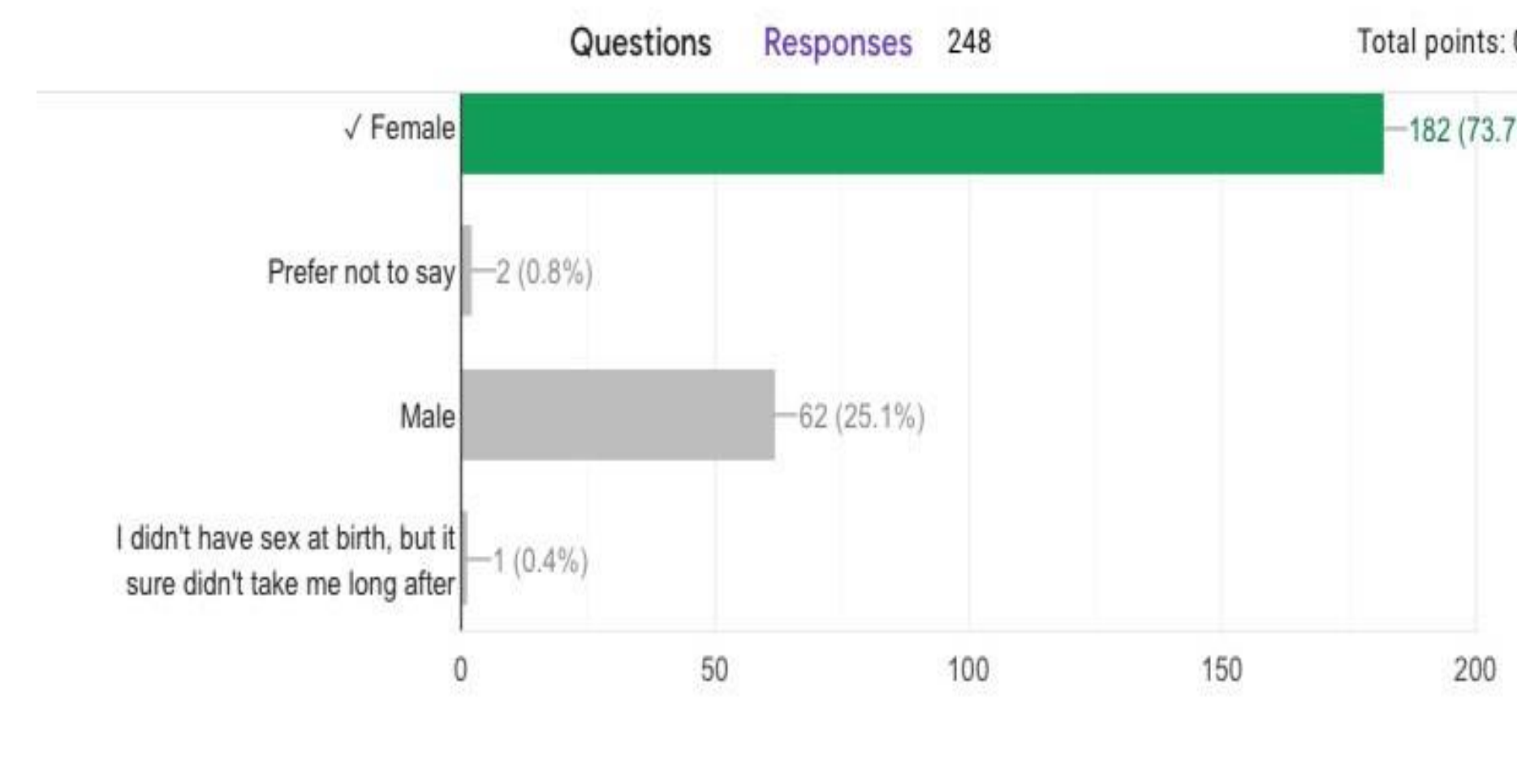
The population of interest is community college students, the study includes economically and educationally disadvantaged participants. In order to protect participants and to ensure that all participants do so willingly and without coercion, all instructions was written at the 6th grade level and clearly explained the purpose of study. No monetary compensation was provided for students who were disadvantaged, researchers offered a comprehensive list of social service agencies for rental assistance and utility support as well as food banks.

Researchers are confident that the benefits of the study outweighed any potential harm caused by the study.

Both STCC and BMCC are largely Hispanic Serving Institutions. According to 2019-2020 enrollment data, there are nearly 27,0000 students enrolled at BMCC. 88% of students are identified as minority with most students identifying, specifically at Hispanic (38%) and Black (28%). STCC has an enrollment of approximately 6,000. 41% of students identify as White, 30% Hispanic, and 14% Black.

Demographics/Results

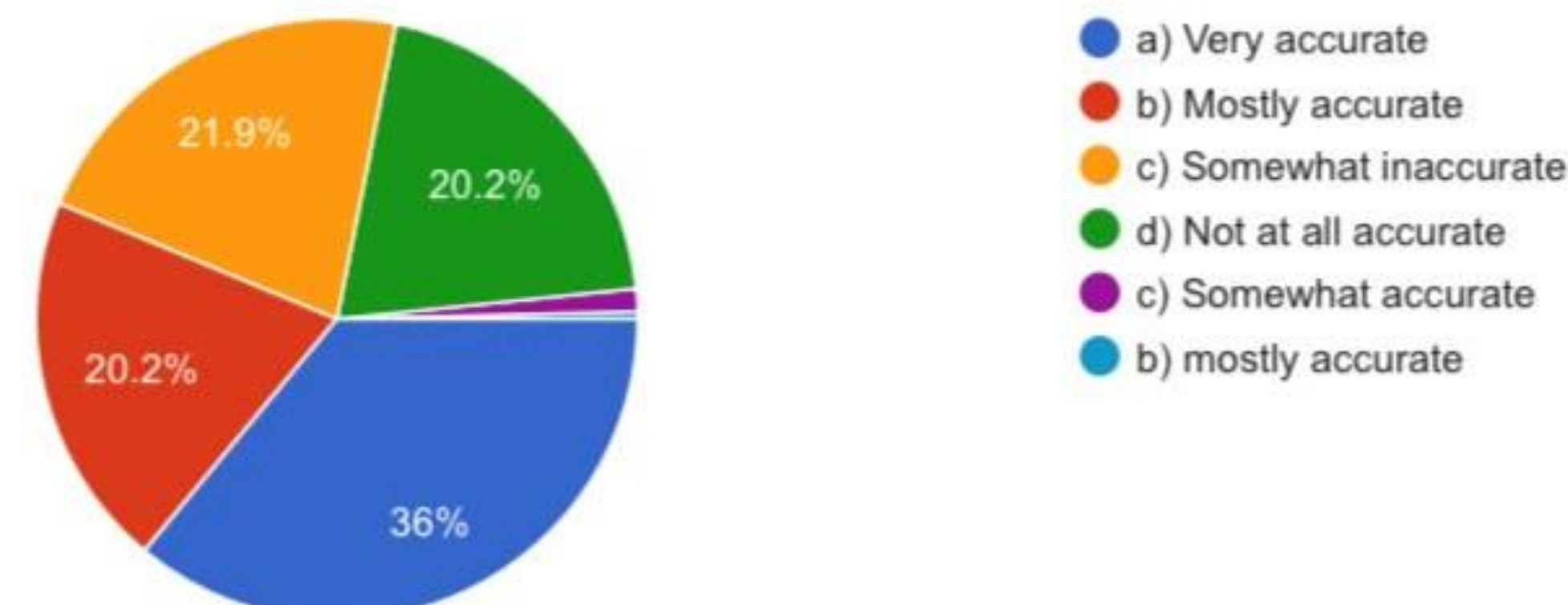
Majority where female respondents at (73%) and men represented (25%)



Hispanics represented majority (89%), American represented (39%), and 14% of Asian Americans Responded

COV4. How accurate is the following statement? Since the advent of COVID-19, I am more worried or concerned about my finances.

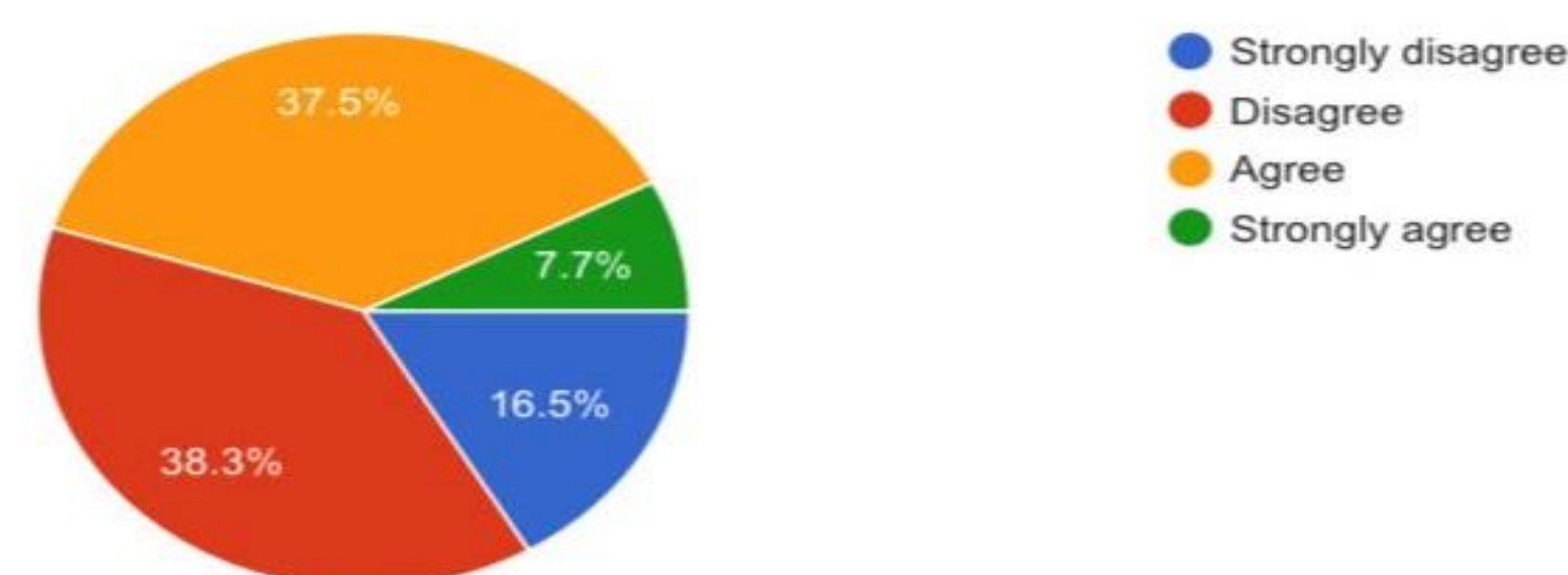
247 responses



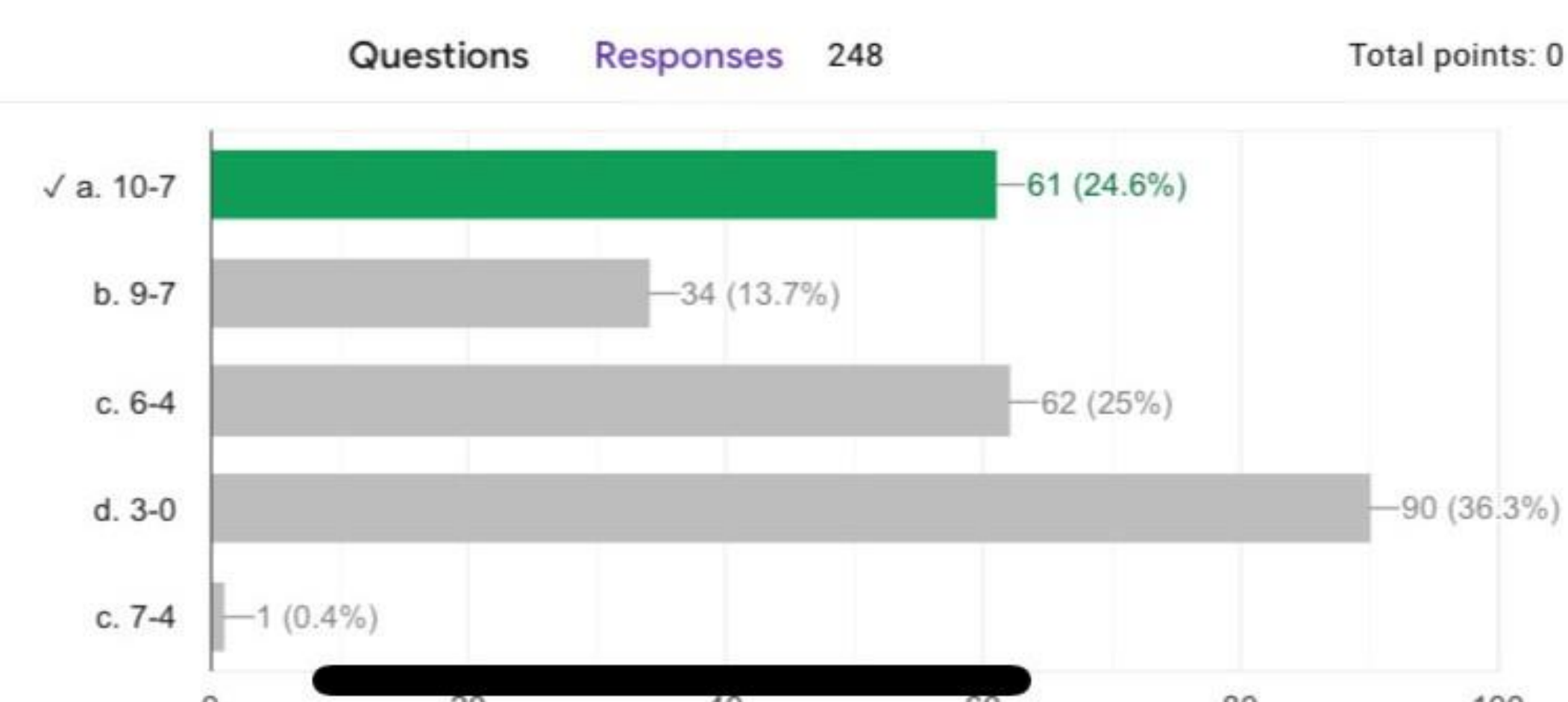
Accurately 36% of respondents answered that they were concerned about there financials, 20% not all at worried and 21% responded somewhat worried

BR2. I have a hard time making it through stressful events.

248 responses



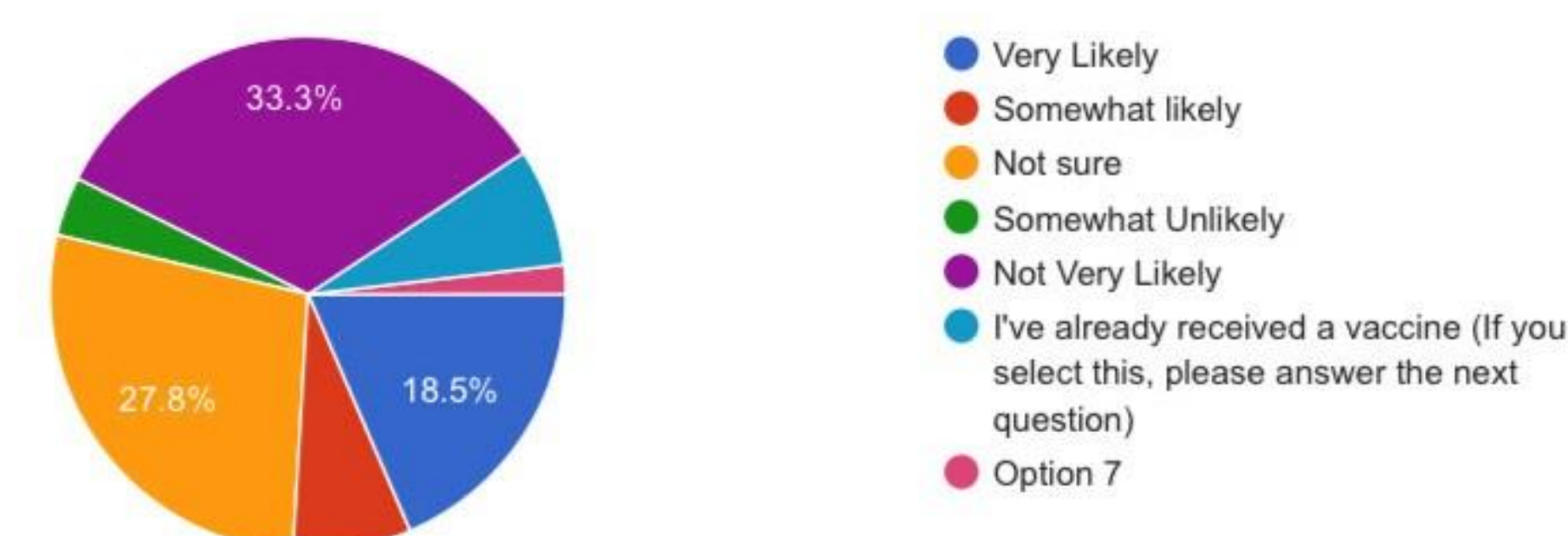
Participates responded having hard time making it through stressful events surveyed 37% agreed , 38.3% disagreed



Feeling bad about themselves or feeling failure at least 7-10 days with in a 2wks period participates responded 38%

How likely is it that you will get one of the three COVID-19 vaccines (Moderna, Johnson and Johnson, Pfizer)

54 responses



Student responded 33.3% unlikely they would get the three COVID-19 vaccines, 27.9 not sure, 18.5% likely

Conclusion

We wanted to know how students were affected throughout the COVID crisis. Based on this preliminary data, we found that 52% felt bad about yourself or that they were a failure or had let their family down. Approximately 63% of the participants experienced anxiety or stress during the study period. Some of the limitations of this study is that we used snowball sampling, so it may not reflect the issues affecting the larger student population. In addition, we only looked at the sample using univariate analysis techniques. Future research should examine the long-term effects of COVID-19 on the mental health outcomes of community college students. In addition, future studies should compare community college students to the four-year college/university counterparts to determine if there is truly a major difference based on the institutional setting of students. Future research in this area will utilize multivariate analysis for a more comprehensive understanding of this group.



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