

SINGLE STRAIN: SINGLE PEOPLE'S SEXUAL HEALTH EXPERIENCES DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN MEASURES.

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Background: The International Sexual Health and REproductive Health (I-SHARE) Study examines the impact of COVID-19 on sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing across over 30 countries. This paper discusses Australian findings of a qualitative component of the study. Young single people have been identified as at risk of stress during COVID-19. Additionally, dating sites are experiencing booms during lockdowns. However, little information exists about the sexual health and wellbeing of single people during this isolating time. This study investigates how isolation measures implemented by the Australian government have affected single people's family structures, relationships, sexual health and wellbeing, and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Methods:

Single people aged 18 - 35 participated in semi-structured interviews, which lasted between 30 - 90 minutes. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. The use of thematic analysis enables a rich and detailed account of the data. A realist method was employed with the aim of reporting experiences and the reality of participants. The transcriptions and coding were managed using the NVIVO software.

Results: *[In progress]*

Preliminary analyses suggest participants' sexual health and wellbeing, and mental health were impacted by the isolation measures and being single during this time. Participants cited the lack of physical human connection, online-dating fatigue and loneliness as sources of stress and, in some cases, more severe mental health issues, including suicidality, during lockdown measures. Many made poor dating choices that they would not have otherwise made due to COVID-19 restrictions. In contrast, many spoke of the benefits of lockdown, including increased exercise, diverse dating opportunities, and strengthened non-romantic connections.

Conclusion:

The impact of COVID-19 on young singles highlights the need for targeted mental health interventions. However, young people also reported a range of positive effects. These findings can inform policy and practice to enhance sexual health and wellbeing.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None.