

Citation: Mugula, O & Atugonza, R. (2021). Socio-Demographics and Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown Fatigue among University Students: A Case of Department of Adult and Community Education, Makerere University. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 5(9), 36 – 51.

Socio-Demographics and Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown Fatigue among University Students: A Case of Department of Adult and Community Education, Makerere University

By

Oscar Mugula¹ & Rose Atugonza²

¹Dr. Oscar Mugula (PhD) is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Adult and Community Education, Makerere University, Kampala Uganda.

²Dr. Rose Atugonza (PhD) is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Adult and Community Education, Makerere University, Kampala Uganda.

Abstract

This study examines and establishes the level of lockdown fatigue and its relationship with socio-demographics of students at Makerere University during COVID-19. Data were collected using an online survey, involving students in the department of Community and Adult education of Makerere University in August 2021. A total of 140 university students responded to the survey. Findings from the study indicate moderate lockdown fatigue among students of Makerere University. Students indicated that their parents were affected by lockdown because some parents lost employment or salary stopped, their salaries reduced, businesses stopped, and their clients reduced. Strategies to manage or alleviate extreme fatigue among university students should look at factors identified to effectively address this growing problem among this group of people during the schools closure. There should be measures in place by government and universities to support their students so that they can stay connected to the community and are update.

Keywords: Fatigue, COVID-19, Lockdown, Socio-demographics

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine and establish the level of lockdown fatigue and its relationship with socio-demographics of students at Makerere University. Prevention measures in many countries since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic have helped to reduce the spread of the disease; however, there is growing concern about their negative effects on health and well-being, especially among students. Schools and the economy have been closed for about two years. Many studies have looked at the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has left out the socio-demographics of students with an increase in student fatigue. These students' socio-demographics predict fatigue that can lead to physical and mental consequences. Therefore this study has examined the socio-demographics and COVID-19 pandemic lockdown fatigue amongst students.

Statement of the Problem

School closures carry high social and economic costs to people in all communities. Their impact however is most severe on the most vulnerable students and their families. The disruption exacerbates existing inequalities in the education system but also in other aspects of their lives (UNESCO, 2021). Although preventive policies have effectively reduced or slowed the transmission of coronavirus, they have adversely affected the quality of life of people, which has serious consequences for mental and psychological health and well-being, especially among young people. Fatigue or mental or physical exhaustion are some of the most reported consequences of lockdown or home confinement measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is therefore necessary to assess and establish the level of lockdown fatigue in relationship with socio-demographics of Makerere University students.

Objectives

The study sought to;

- (1) Examine the socio-demographics and lockdown fatigue amongst Makerere University students
- (2) Establish the relationship between socio-demographics and lockdown fatigue amongst Makerere University students

Literature Review

We discussed the socio-demographic characteristics of students and the COVID-19 lockdown fatigue they experienced. We assumed that socio-demographics such as parent's loss of jobs, business and any other source of income limits students' basic needs and this affects their lives, resulting to stress. Stress can make you sick and depressed. You may also have headaches and

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insomnia, body becoming weak and unable to do any good. Stress has a profound effect on a person's mind and body and may cause the body fatigued.

Socio-demographics and Lockdown Fatigue

Socio-demographics refer to a combination of social and demographic factors that define a group or group of people. Demographic characteristics include age, sex, place of residence, religion, educational level and marital status. Social factors are factors that have more purpose, such as membership in organizations, family status, interests, values and social groups. Although lockdown policies have effectively reduced the transmission of coronavirus, they have adversely affected the quality of life of people, which has negative effects on mental and psychological well-being, especially in young people (Marroquín et al., 2020; Eliz & Ender, 2020).

Lockdown fatigue has been described worldwide as a state of exhaustion caused by prolonged exposure to the effects of COVID-19 and the changes it has made in many aspects of human health. It's a state where people have had to accept it as a virus that has affected every aspect of their lives and their freedom, and it has been going on for months, not ending until a vaccine or treatment is available. Fatigue is a mental or physical state of tiredness and lack of energy (Jorgensen, 2008). It is one of the most widely reported effects of lockdown or home confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic (Australian Psychological Society, 2020).

According to the Australian Psychological Society, excessive fatigue occurs as a result of significant disruption in individual activities, isolation, insecurity, imminent threat to health, and uncertainty of the future, and can be seen as a combination of physical, mental, and / or emotional symptoms. Although fatigue is psychological, it is often an unpleasant experience when a person is filled with a strong feeling of tiredness that cannot be relieved by rest or food, a great longing for rest, physical and mental weakness, and a decrease in motivation and feeling of happiness (Trendall, 2000). It reduces a person's ability to function normally on a daily basis and can lead to a decline in quality of life (Ream, & Richardson, 1997). According to the Australian Psychological Society (2020) lock-down related fatigue is characterized by; sadness, physical exhaustion, diminished interest in previously enjoyed activities, mood swings, and anxiety and fear. Several researchers (Jiao et al., 2020; Majumdar et al., 2020; Margaritis et al., 2020; Kapasia et al., 2020; Dangi et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2020) have noted other symptoms of extreme fatigue including; tiredness, sleep disturbances, uncertainty, loneliness, irritability, increased fear and anxiety, lack of motivation, and loss of interest in activities that were previously enjoyed. As young adults value greater social networking and are more involved in community activities than in other years, they are more affected by measures of lockdown or home confinement during pandemic (Arslan, 2018; SAVCI & Aysan, 2019). This can lead to loss of communication with peers and friends, more isolation, emotional loneliness, leading to increased risk of fatigue and other mental health problems (Singh et al., 2020; Labrague, 2020). Evidence among university students from France has shown a significant increase in the prevalence of psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and distress (Husky et al., 2020) and symptoms of physical exhaustion, including tiredness, headache, insomnia, fatigue and muscle pain (Majumdar et al., 2020; Branquinho, 2020) for young people during lockdown. Therefore, steps must be taken to better support young people during the pandemic to reduce the negative effects of lockdown on their mental, and physiological well-being.

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Material and Methods

An online cross-sectional survey involving 140 university students in the Department of Adult and Community Education, Makerere University was carried out during the national schools' lockdown in 2021. All years from year one to year three participated in the survey. The online survey had two sections; A: Socio-demographics, with 10 items considering common characteristics of students in Uganda. Socio-demographics included gender, year of study, level of studies, location of home, student status, and family source of income, lockdown effect, income level, family size and socio-economic status. B: Lockdown Fatigue was measured basing on 10 items on a 5- Likert scale adapted from Lockdown Fatigue scale by Labrague (2020). The fatigue scale was used to evaluate the students' experiences during lockdown. We measured the fatigue levels using the mean range of 0.8. To determine the minimum and the maximum length of the 5-point Likert type scale, the range was calculated by $(5 - 1 = 4)$ then divided by five as it is the greatest value of the scale $(4 \div 5 = 0.80)$. Afterwards, number one which is the least value in the scale was added in order to identify the maximum of this cell. The length of the cells is determined as shown: 1.00 – 1.80 is never (low), 1.81 – 2.60 is sometimes (mild), 2.61-3.40 is regularly (moderate), 3.41 – 4.20 is often (high) and 4.21 – 5.00 is always (very high).

Results and Discussion

Data completeness was tested before entering data into the SPSS version 25. To quantify data, we calculated frequencies, standard deviations, and means. Bivariate analysis was performed using Pearson coefficient (r) to assess the correlation between variables of the study. The statistical significance level was set as $p < 0.05$. One hundred and forty university students from the department of adult and community education at Makerere University participated in the study. Socio-demographics results are shown on Table 1.

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Table 1: Students' Socio-demographic Characteristics (n = 140)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	78	55.7
	Male	62	44.3
Year of study	Year one	24	17.2
	Year Two	96	68.6
	Year Three	20	14.3
Qualifications	Diploma	1	.7
	Bachelor's	137	97.9
	Master's	2	1.4
Home location	Urban community	98	70.0
	Rural Community	42	30.0
	Private sponsored	138	98.6
Student Status	Government sponsored	2	1.4
Family source of income	Government salary	4	2.9
	Private sector salary	30	21.4
	Daily wages from manual work	26	18.6
	Consultancy	4	2.9
	Retail business	14	10.0
	Wholesale business	2	1.4
	Crop farming	22	15.7
	Cattle rearing	8	5.7
	Other activities	30	21.4
	Family monthly income	200,000ugx and below	46
500,000ugx and below		54	38.6
1 million Ugx and below		18	12.9
1.5million Ugx and below		4	2.9
Above 2 million Ugx		18	12.9
Family size	Two	4	2.9
	Three	4	2.9
	Four	24	17.1
	Five	26	18.6
	More than five	82	58.6
Family socio-economic Status	Low	52	37.1
	Middle	80	57.1
	High	8	5.7

Source: Field data (2021)

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Results from Table 1 indicate that majority 78(55.7%) of respondents were females and more than half 96 (68.6%) were in their second years of university education. More than half 137(97.9%) of the respondents were pursuing bachelor’s degree. Majority 98(70.0%) of the respondents live in urban communities and majority of them 138(98.6%) are self-sponsored. Majority 97.1% of the respondents’ parents/guardians work in private sector, only 4% of the respondents’ parents are employed by government. Furthermore results from Table 1 indicate that majority of the respondents have a monthly income less than 500,000 Ugandan shillings with bigger families of more than five members. Majority 80(57.1%) of the respondents perceive their family socio-economic status to be middle.

Effect of lockdown on household source of income

Participants were asked to tell how lockdown affected their parents/guardians’ source of income. Results are shown on Table 2.

Table 2: How did lockdown affect your parent/guardian's source of income?

Lockdown effect	Frequency	Percent
Salary/employment stopped	16	11.4
Salary reduced	22	15.7
Business stopped	28	20.0
Clients reduced	38	27.1
Others	36	25.7
Total	140	100.0

Source: Field data (2021)

Results from Table 2 indicate that respondents’ parents were affected by lockdown; 16 (11.4%) of respondents’ parents lost employment or salary stopped, 22(15.7%) of the respondents said that their parents’ salaries reduced, 28(20.0%) of the respondents said that their parents’ businesses stopped, 38(27.1%) of the respondents said that their parents’ clients reduced whereas 36(25.7%) of the respondents said that lockdown affected their parents/guardians’ income in other ways. Some university students have seen their parents laid off, lost their jobs or closed down businesses - major events that have shaken their family finances and this must be making them think hard how they will realize their dreams. Jessica (2020) noted that in the USA, due to the epidemic, more than 13 million college students are worried about their financial future. This could be the case for Ugandan students whose parental sources of income have been disrupted by the nationwide lockdown.

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Descriptive Statistics for Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown Fatigue

Lockdown fatigues was measured using 10 items on a 5- Likert scale ranging from never to always as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Lockdown Fatigue

Lockdown/Pandemic Fatigue Scale Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I worry a lot about my personal and family's safety during pandemic	140	1.00	5.00	3.81	1.41
I have felt sad and depressed as a result of the lockdown	140	1.00	5.00	3.57	1.25
I frequently felt weak or tired as a result of the lockdown	140	1.00	5.00	3.07	1.31
I have difficulty concentrating and distracted easily	140	1.00	5.00	3.27	1.35
I have been feeling irritable	140	1.00	5.00	2.89	1.26
I have difficulty falling or staying asleep over thinking about this pandemic	140	1.00	5.00	2.49	1.30
I have been losing my interests to do the usual things I have	140	1.00	5.00	2.74	1.20
I have been experiencing a general sense of emptiness	140	1.00	5.00	2.76	1.31
I have been experiencing headaches and body pains	140	1.00	5.00	2.19	1.09
I have thoughts that this pandemic will never end soon	140	1.00	5.00	3.29	1.52
Grand mean				3.01	

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 3 results shows the grand mean of 3.01, implying moderate lockdown fatigue among respondents. Results shows that majority of respondents ($M = 3.81$) often worried about their personal and family's safety during pandemic and majority ($M = 3.57$) often felt sad and depressed as a result of the lockdown. Results further indicate that majority ($M = 3.07$) of the respondents regularly felt weak or tired as a result of the lockdown and majority ($M = 3.27$) of them regularly had difficulty concentrating and distracted easily. In addition, majority ($M = 2.89$) of the respondents revealed that they regularly felt irritable and majority ($M = 2.49$) of the respondents regularly had difficulty falling or staying asleep over thinking about the pandemic. Table 3 results continue to show that majority ($M = 2.74$) of the respondents regularly lost their interests to do the usual things they have and majority ($M = 2.76$) of the respondents have been experiencing a general sense of emptiness. Furthermore, majority ($M = 2.19$) of the respondents sometimes experienced headaches and body pains and majority ($M = 3.29$) regularly think this pandemic will never end soon.

Labrague and Ballad (2021) in their study to assess fatigue caused by lockdown among college students in Central Philippines found that students experienced a moderate level of fatigue during the mandatory lockdown period. Their results are in agreement with the findings of this current study at Makerere University in Uganda. Sarita and Leach (2020) said, the feelings of fatigue you are experiencing may be related to the mental burden associated with COVID-19 and not the physical burden.

The pandemic has caused people to be confused and insecure, and to give others a sense of dread. All of these feelings can lead to poor sleep quality, which can make people very tired and anxious (Sarita & Leach, 2020). As the future looks uncertain and society is ordered to stay

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home, most of us feel lonely and depressed - and it affects our sleep (Lydia & Sarah, 2020), the same applies to the Ugandan context. These findings are consistent with those of a previous study by Nitschke et al., (2021) who, using the Chalder Fatigue Questionnaire observed a significant degree of fatigue in Australian citizens within a few months of forced lockdown. Using Google Trends to evaluate the effects of home confinement measures in Europe and American Brodeur et al., (2021) found compelling evidence of a dramatic increase in sadness, loneliness, anxiety, and fatigue in many people from the first week to 4 months of initiation. Reports from India, the USA, and Saudi Arabia also show ample evidence that people are getting tired and tired as time goes on, suggesting that efforts should be made to support this group and prevent the negative consequences of long lockdown or home confinement (Meo et al., 2020; Majumdar et al., 2020). High levels of fatigue can adversely affect physical, mental, behavioral, and cognitive functioning (WHO, 2021). This continuous lockdown of schools in Uganda might lead to more adverse psychological consequences on students.

Relationship between Students' Socio-demographic Characteristics and Lockdown Fatigue

To establish the relationship between socio-demographics and lockdown fatigue amongst Makerere University students, a Pearson correlation analysis was done and results are shown in Table 4.

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Table 4: Correlations for socio-demographics and lockdown fatigue

Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Fatigue
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	.160	.055	.169*	.135	-.044	-.052	-.064	.044	.263**	-.262**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.059	.520	.045	.112	.610	.541	.452	.602	.002	.002
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Year of study	Pearson Correlation	.160	1	-.085	.189*	.209*	.208*	-.119	.125	.136	.150	-.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.059		.319	.025	.013	.014	.160	.141	.110	.077	.613
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Qualification you are pursuing	Pearson Correlation	.055	.085	1	.075	.006	.032	.170*	-.042	.130	.143	-.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.520	.319		.381	.945	.710	.045	.618	.126	.091	.936
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Location of your home	Pearson Correlation	.169*	.189*	.075	1	.184*	.009	.226**	.253**	.191*	.293**	.256**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	.025	.381		.030	.916	.007	.003	.024	.000	.002
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Your student status	Pearson Correlation	.135	.209*	.006	.184*	1	.165	.145	.105	.085	.144	.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.112	.013	.945	.030		.052	.086	.219	.316	.090	.096
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Source of income	Pearson Correlation	.044	.208*	.032	.009	.165	1	.351**	.035	.056	.131	-.028
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.610	.014	.710	.916	.052		.000	.679	.510	.123	.739
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Lockdown effect on income	Pearson Correlation	.052	.119	.170*	.226**	.145	.351**	1	.052	.183*	.079	.098
	Sig. (2-tailed)											
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140

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	Sig. (2-tailed)	.541	.160	.045	.007	.086	.000	.542	.031	.354	.250
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Family income per month	Pearson Correlation	-.064	.125	-.042	-.253**	.105	.035	.052	.026	.602**	-.081
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.452	.141	.618	.003	.219	.679	.542	.761	.000	.342
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Family Size	Pearson Correlation	.044	.136	.130	.191*	.085	.056	.183*	.026	.122	.201*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.602	.110	.126	.024	.316	.510	.031	.761	.152	.017
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Socio-economic status	Pearson Correlation	-.263**	.150	.143	-.293**	.144	-.131	-.079	-.602**	.121	.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.077	.091	.000	.090	.123	.354	.000	.152	.801
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Fatigue	Pearson Correlation	-.262**	.043	.007	-.256**	.141	-.028	-.098	-.081	.201*	.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.613	.936	.002	.096	.739	.250	.342	.017	.801
	N	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 4 results shows a negative correlation between gender, and lockdown fatigue ($r = -.262, p < .01$) and positive correlation between home location and lockdown fatigue ($r = .256, p < .01$) and family size is positively correlated to lockdown fatigue ($r = .201, p < .05$). Junghaenel et al., (2011) examined the general population fatigue: whether women would report higher levels of fatigue compared to men, and whether married people would experience lower fatigue compared to single people. Their results showed that women reported higher levels of fatigue than men. Rastogi and Srinivasan (2021) have reported that students are struggling to adjust to the reality that a fast broadband connection cannot keep the real connections of love and friendships alive, and the endless online classes, exams don't necessarily translate to good learning. For a year and a half of uncertainty about exams, separation from friends and peers, and the loss of loved ones in some cases, mental fatigue and trauma from the pandemic have left an indelible mark on their young minds (Rastogi & Srinivasan, 2021). Tara et al., (2020) on the CNN channel reported that

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90% of the world's students are closed out of schools and it will hit the poorest children than the rich. This is exactly the case of what is happening at Makerere University, where students were sent home due to lockdown when they had not yet finished their exams and most of them are not digitally connected. Many students who do not have pre-existing mental health concerns will experience severe anxiety and depression as well.

Variables were further analyzed by multiple linear regression (Table 5) to establish the variance in fatigue.

Table 5: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Adj.R ²
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	18.213	11.599		1.570	.119	.153
Gender	-4.820	1.288	-.315	-3.743	.000	
Year of study	-.164	1.137	-.012	-.144	.885	
Qualification you are pursuing	-1.080	4.191	-.021	-.258	.797	
Location of home	4.266	1.450	.257	2.943	.004	
Student status	8.583	5.274	.134	1.627	.106	
Source of income	-.182	.239	-.066	-.759	.449	
Lockdown effect on source of income	.055	.509	.010	.109	.914	
Family income per month	-.384	.494	-.080	-.778	.438	
Family size	1.261	.606	.170	2.079	.040	
Socio-economic status	1.230	1.417	.093	.868	.387	

a. Dependent Variable: Fatigue
Source: Field data (2021)

A multiple regression was run to predict Lockdown fatigue from gender, year of study, qualification, home location, student status, income, lockdown effect on income and family size. The combined variables statistically significantly predicted fatigue where $p < .05$, $R^2 = .153$. However, only gender, home location and family size added statistically significantly to the prediction, $p < .05$. These three variables contribute 15.3% of the variance in lockdown fatigue among university students in Makerere university of Uganda. There must be other numerous factors that lead to student fatigue during school closures because of Covid-19 pandemic. These results are almost similar to what Labrague and Ballad (2021) got when they ran a regression analysis of gender, level of education and fatigue among college students. Their model reported 15.7% for LFS variance, which was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

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Table 6: Cross Tabulation of Gender and Lockdown Fatigue Factors

Count	Fatigue	Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
I worry a lot about my personal and family's safety during pandemic	Always	46	30	76
	Often	4	6	10
	Regularly	8	2	10
	Sometimes	20	20	40
	Never	0	4	4
I have felt sad and depressed as a result of the lockdown	Always	32	16	48
	Often	14	10	24
	Regularly	16	16	32
	Sometimes	16	16	32
	Never	0	4	4
I frequently felt weak or tired as a result of the lockdown	Always	16	8	24
	Often	28	12	40
	Regularly	4	6	10
	Sometimes	28	26	54
	Never	2	10	12
I have difficulty concentrating and distracted easily	Always	26	12	38
	Often	14	12	26
	Regularly	14	8	22
	Sometimes	20	24	44
	Never	4	6	10
I have been feeling irritable	Always	8	12	38
	Often	26	6	32
	Regularly	14	8	22
	Sometimes	20	24	44
	Never	4	6	10
I have difficulty falling or staying asleep over thinking about this pandemic	Always	10	6	16
	Often	16	6	22
	Regularly	2	4	6
	Sometimes	40	26	66
	Never	10	20	30
I have been losing my interests to do the usual things I love	Always	12	8	20
	Often	12	4	16
	Regularly	12	10	22
	Sometimes	36	36	72
	Never	6	4	10
I have been experiencing headaches and body pains	Always	4	2	6

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	Often	10	6	16
	Regularly	6	8	14
	Sometimes	40	26	66
	Never	18	20	38
	Always	36	14	50
I have thoughts that this pandemic will never end soon	Often	6	12	18
	Regularly	4	8	12
	Sometimes	22	20	42
	Never	10	8	18
Total		78	62	140

Source: Field data (2021)

Results from the cross tabulation Table 6 indicate that female students (n = 46) worried a lot about their personal and family's safety during pandemic than (n = 30) male students and females (n = 32) felt more sad and depressed always than males (n = 16). Results further indicate that more females felt weak or tired always (n = 16) than males (n=8) during lockdown and more females (n = 26) always had difficulty concentrating and distracted easily than males (n = 12). In addition, more females (n = 26) often felt irritable than males (n = 6) and many females (n = 10) have been having difficulty falling or staying asleep over thinking about this pandemic than males (n = 6). More females (n = 12) have been losing interests to do the usual things they love compared to males (n = 8) and many females (n =40) sometimes have been experiencing headaches and body pains compared to me males (n = 26). Many females (n =36) have thoughts always that the pandemic will never end soon compared to males (n = 14). Many studies including this current study have showed that female students experienced higher levels of fatigue compared to male students. For example, female students experienced an increased level of fatigue compared to male students in a study by Labrague and Ballard (2020). These results should be interpreted with caution due to the unequal distribution of male and female participants in this study. However, these effects may be due to gender differences in the expression of emotions, including anxiety, fear and sadness, and even in their manifestation of pain and physical discomfort (Labrague & Ballard, 2020), similar to the current situation at Makerere University.

Conclusion

Prolonged school closure measures or home confinement of students to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 can cause many levels of fatigue for students. This study has found that there is moderate fatigue caused by lockdown among students. Female students have been found to experience greater fatigue than male students. Students have acknowledged that lockdown affected their source of income and their way of doing things and this has led them to get fatigued. Strategies to manage or alleviate extreme fatigue among university students should look at factors identified to effectively address this growing problem among this group of people during the schools closure.

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Recommendations

Lockdown fatigue can be addressed by developing and implementing interventions to increase self-reliance and coping skills among university students. Also, there should be measures in place by government and universities to support their students so that they can stay connected to the community and are updated. Future research using a mixed methods approach examining the effectiveness and interventions to reduce fatigue for college students should be conducted nationally.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank students of Makerere University who managed to respond to this online survey during schools lockdown.

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