

## Loneliness in the time of COVID-19

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### ABSTRACT

University students have been identified as a particular risk group for experiencing loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aimed to examine levels of loneliness and COVID-19 related anxiety amongst the student population during the second year of the pandemic and was particularly interested in the effect of demographic risk factors associated with loneliness, specifically, living situation, gender and age. Research employed a between-groups design with participants recruited via voluntary response sampling and asked to complete an online survey. 153 university students participated ( $M_{age} = 25.62$ ) and were assigned to the independent variables based on their response to demographic background questions. The independent variables were accommodation status, gender and age group and the dependent variables were loneliness, as measured by the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3), and COVID-19 related anxiety, as measured by the Coronavirus Anxiety Scale. Analysis showed there was a statistically significant main effect for living situation on loneliness scores ( $p = .013$ ) and a statistically significant difference between living situations in terms of COVID-19 related anxiety scores ( $p = .026$ ). There was no statistically significant effect found for gender or age group. Findings indicate that loneliness was widespread amongst university students at the time of assessment and that students who live alone are particularly vulnerable to experiencing loneliness.

**Keywords:** accommodation, COVID-19 related anxiety, gender, living alone, university students