THE EFFECTS OF LOCKDOWN ON SELF IMAGE

Vicki Nixon, Isabel Anderson and Alisha Thompson.

THIS DOCUMENT WILL EXPLORE THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED INTO THE EFFECTS OF LOCKDOWN ON SELF-IMAGE

Over the course of year 12 we were lucky enough to take part in a research group. In this project we got the chance to investigate what affects young people the most, as a group we decided to investigate the effects of lockdown on mental health specifically self-image.

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What is self-image?

Self-image in the way we investigated means how our self-esteem and self-concept come together to create the image we have of our selves and how we think and feel about oneself this can change from day to day with different factors affecting this perception.

Why did we investigate this?

We decided to investigate this as we are part of the demographic, we asked who have experienced lockdown whilst trying to maintain online school and a health diet as well as regular exercise, all of which can contribute to whether you have a positive self-image. We wanted to investigate how these factors impacted/affected these individuals between the ages of 16-24, and to also see which factor was more important in the maintenance of self-image.

What have we investigated and how?

We as a team decided to research 5 factors that could affect self-image.

- Access to outdoor space and activities
- Eating habits
- Sleeping habits
- Schoolwork
- Friends and family

CONSENT THROUGH OUT THE PROCESS

At the beginning of every survey we asked for explicit informed consent and we asked that the participants know their right to withdraw aswell as their age being 16- 24 so as the could legally give consent.

At the end they were reminded of their right to withdraw along with an email they could contact to do this.

To do this we created a survey that involved both open and closed questions such as; "have you ben able to stay in contact with friends and family during lockdown?" , and "how has the pandemic affected your overall self-image?". With both quantitative and qualitive data we were able to evaluate the data both scientifically using numbers and anecdotally to get a true representative of the participants answers. This survey was then distributed to schools across Cumbria to ensure a varied sample size so that it is generalizable.

One open-ended question we asked on our survey was "how has the pandemic affected your overall self-image?" We felt it would be beneficial to our research to ask such an open-ended question because it could give us a direct yet personal answer that truly showed us how diverse people felt about themselves and lockdown. To give you an example, one participant said "As I've lost muscle tone, I feel quite unhappy with my body image" in direct contrast to this another said "Quite positively… let my hair do what it wants and seize the day"

Lockdown was a difficult time for everyone overall, but we saw inside perspectives like the one above that we wouldn't have thought of. Some responses were positive, perhaps even feeling better in lockdown than previously before. After asking if participants felt their perception of their self-image had changed, one person said, "learnt to love my body for what it is" So lockdown wasn't a black and white situation in terms of our generations self-image and perception of oneself, in fact some say they didn't feel a change at all. Its responses like this that made us glad we included open ended questions, as statistics can only say so much. Despite this, most responses were negative.

"More critical of my looks", "I feel more negatively towards my body" and "I'm not as happy with how I look and feel" Were all responses to the same question I just mentioned. On a scale of 1-5, we asked our participants "overall, how do you feel about yourself after lockdown?" which was met with a 3.19 average rating.

To properly investigate why people's self-image was negatively affected, we asked participants to what extent, from a scale of 1-10, did the following factors affect your self-image? 62% of participants scored eating habits as 8 or above, with 37% scoring it a 10. With this data we can conclude that eating habits was one of the major factors affecting self-image. Responses to open ended questions show this as well, some participants commented on being disorganized, commenting on how their mental state and abilities were affected by lockdown, however most responses said they felt they had gained weight, or were unhappy with how little they exercised "messed up my routine, put weight on and struggled to get back into exercise"

100% of participants said they had access to the outdoors and activities, and it was the lowest factor affecting self-image with only 25% of participants ranking it 8 or above. In fact, we guessed that perhaps one of the other factors could have impacted the

overwhelming presence of responses related to weight and eating habits. The second highest rated factor was sleep habits, 37.5% of participants rated sleep habits 8 or above. Many participants said they felt disorganized or that they have fallen out of routine. Lack of sleep can result in failure to complete tasks effectively, such as schoolwork. The lack of sleep may also lead to under or overeating. I don't think its far fetched to assume that sleeping schedules ad habits may have been a main contributing factor to the negative impact of self-image.

Conclusion

To conclude our research, we think the most important factor affecting someone's self-image may be eating habits, many participants said they felt overweight, some even saying body dysmorphia. This also begs the question of whether people are truly unhealthy and eating too much or too little or whether it's all up to self-perception and doubt. This is something we could investigate further going forward.

I think more emphasis should be put on how important sleep schedules are. Whilst it wasn't the highest rated factor, I feel sleep has a significant toll on many participants self-image and overall self-worth. I think schools and universities should be more aware of this, too often I see people speaking of how they stayed up all night doing homework or revising. Even worse, students often feel proud of this as if its an accomplishment I know I have and I believe that it's a deep-rooted mind set schools should try address. This could be done by having presentations during form time or taking time during PD to address these issues. Maybe study periods could be implemented lower down in school someday.

Doing this research was incredibly rewarding, being able to see the other perspectives of our generation was incredible, especially since some of our own views were opposed to that of some of the participants. Not only was it rewarding this way, it was also a great experience to be able to put together a genuine survey and collect data like true researchers. Compiling that data to create this document in the hopes our research and views can be of some use and even if they aren't it is an experience we are honored to have had.