



**STRESS, SLEEP, DIET, AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

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Purpose: The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced various changes in our society, population health, and individual routines and habits, raising stress and anxiety levels in the lives and families of many around the world. The goal of this study was to evaluate how pandemic related changes affect sleep, diet, and physical activity among adults aged 18 and older in Utah.

Methods: 200 adults (age >18) were recruited for the study. Research staff collected 15-minute qualitative telephone interviews from each participant using a standardized interview guide to assess perceptions of how COVID-19 pandemic has affected routines and health behaviors. 2 interviews were collected per participant and were recorded via zoom. Interviews were then automatically transcribed using “Trint,” a transcription software program. Research staff verified and edited the transcriptions to maximize interview transcription accuracy. 30 transcriptions were then selected for qualitative analysis, and each transcription was coded for common themes and patterns using the coding software program “Dedoose.”

Results: After conducting and completing the data collection portion of our research study, we extrapolated four major themes that were relevant in the qualitative results: sleep, diet, physical activity, and stress. Positive results included improved diet and physical activity among some participants. Despite these positive changes, our results indicate that psychological distress during the pandemic was related to poor sleep performance and overall decreased physical activity. This supports our hypothesis that health behaviors (sleep, diet, and physical activity) are impacted by individual, social, and environmental stressors.

Conclusion: The results from our research study demonstrate how health behaviors (sleep, diet, physical activity) are impacted by individual, social, and environmental stressors. Studying the role of health behaviors in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic provides a unique opportunity to examine behavior, stress, and resiliency in response to a common and severe stressor. The results of this study can lead to future research and interventions to improve stress prevention, psychological adjustment, and population health.