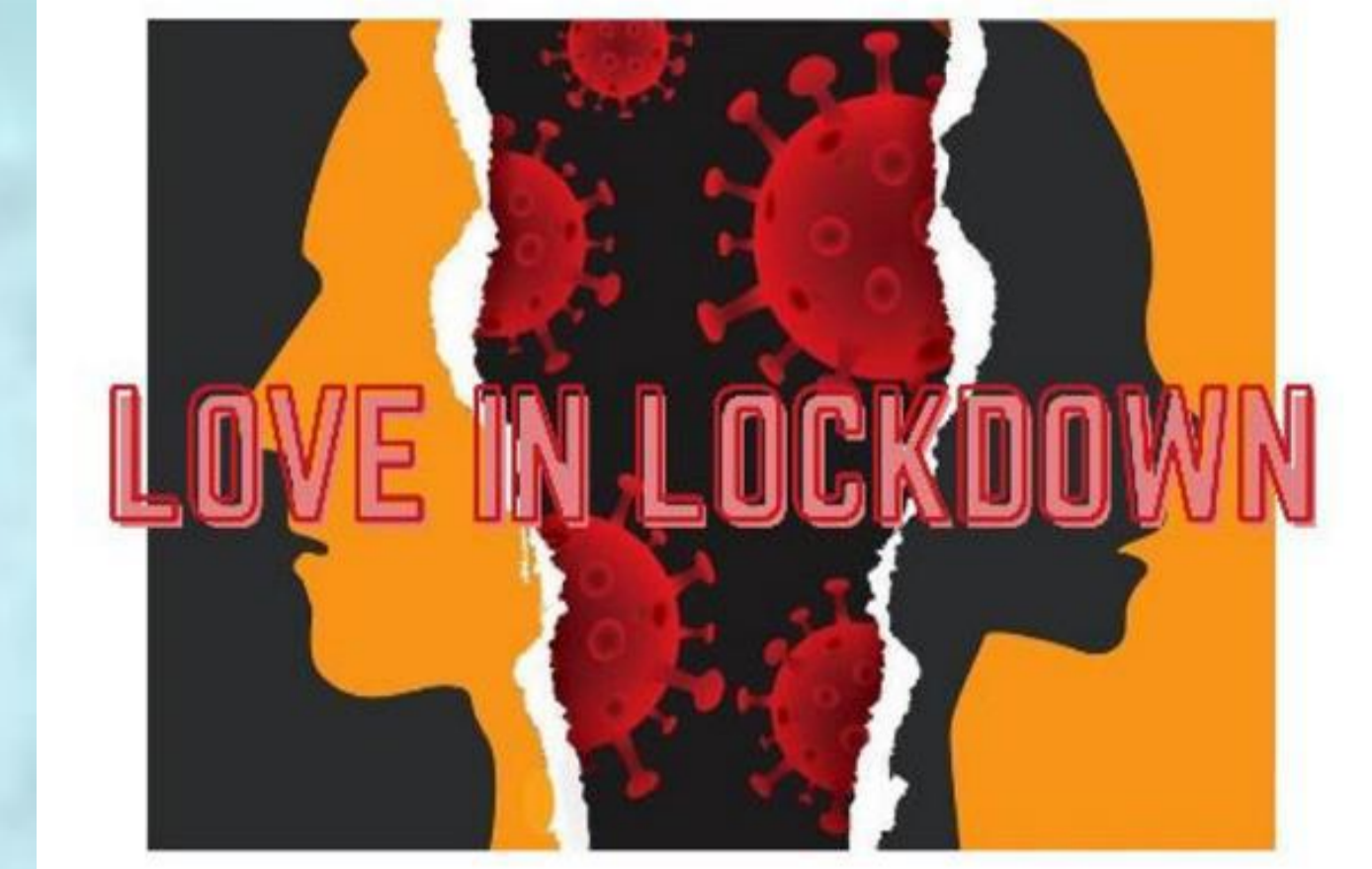


# Impact of COVID-19 on the intimate relationships of young adults between the ages of 18-30 years in Trinidad and Tobago

B Bachan, C Cook, C Howard, C Joseph, C Lucas, B Sidhooram, C Sookoo, C Stewart, Dr. Katija Khan

<sup>1</sup>Department of Paraclinical Sciences, <sup>2</sup>Psychiatry Unit, Department of Clinical Medical Sciences, Faculty of Medical Sciences, The UWI

e: celine.howard@my.uwi.edu katija.khan@sta.uwi.edu



## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sudden halt in normal day-to-day movements & interactions across the world. Restrictive measures were implemented to lessen the spread of the virus, however, it altered social interactions. In times of stress, persons usually turn to social support for comfort. However, this pandemic has forced individuals to be isolated. Although the physical health of individuals has been addressed somewhat, their mental health has not been prioritized.

Young adults in relationships were either isolated with or away from their partner, while single young adults were generally without a stable companion. With the impacts discovered from this research, new measures can be adopted in society & health facilities to mediate the harmful effects this pandemic caused & will cause on the mental health of young adults with respect to dating and relationships.

## Objective

- To determine whether or not intimate relationships of young adults between the ages of 18-30 years in Trinidad and Tobago have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To determine changes in the frequency, type and quality of relationship interactions during the pandemic.
- To determine the association between relationship changes with depression, anxiety and loneliness during the pandemic.

## Methodology

- Study Population:** 18 to 30 years, residing in Trinidad & Tobago.
- Study Design:** Cross-sectional online community survey, conducted via Survey Monkey.
- Sample size:** Convenience sampling - 384 participants (2011 CSO Census Data).
- Data Collection:** Distributed via social media sites (WhatsApp, Instagram, etc.) Demographics, multiple-choice & psychosocial questions
- Data Analysis:** SPSS version 24 - Descriptive, Non-parametric & Inferential Statistics.
- Data Protection:** Data file only accessible to principal investigator & research team.

## Results

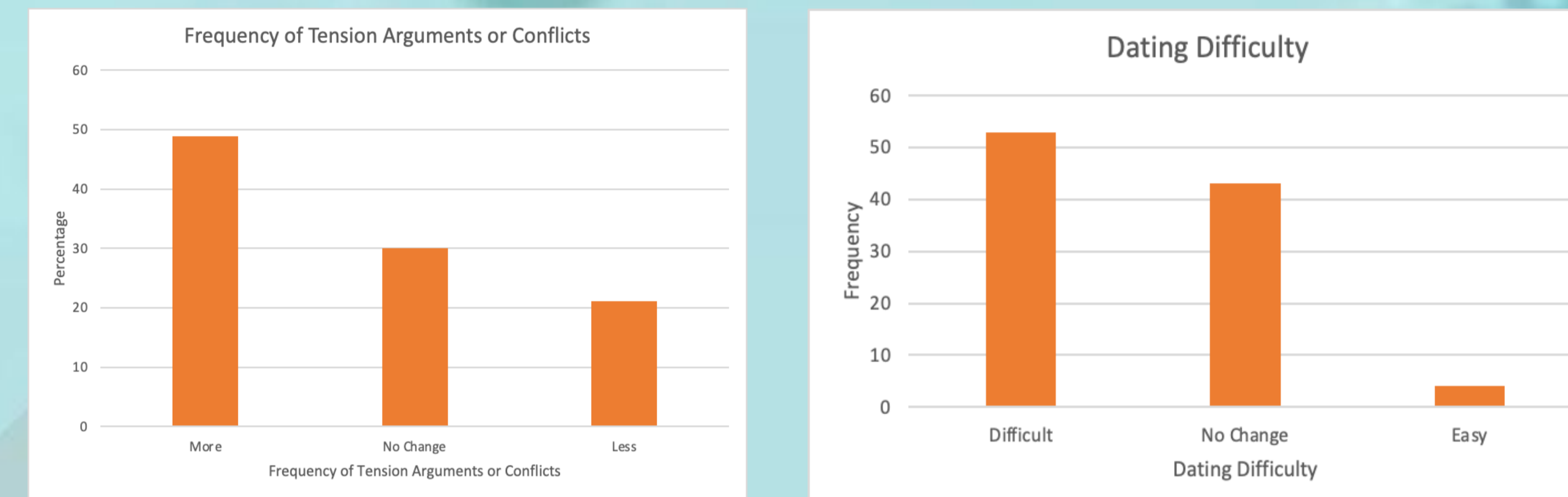


Figure 1 (left) shows that the frequency of tension, arguments or conflicts has increased among couples.

Figure 2 (right) shows the level of dating difficulty among single youth.

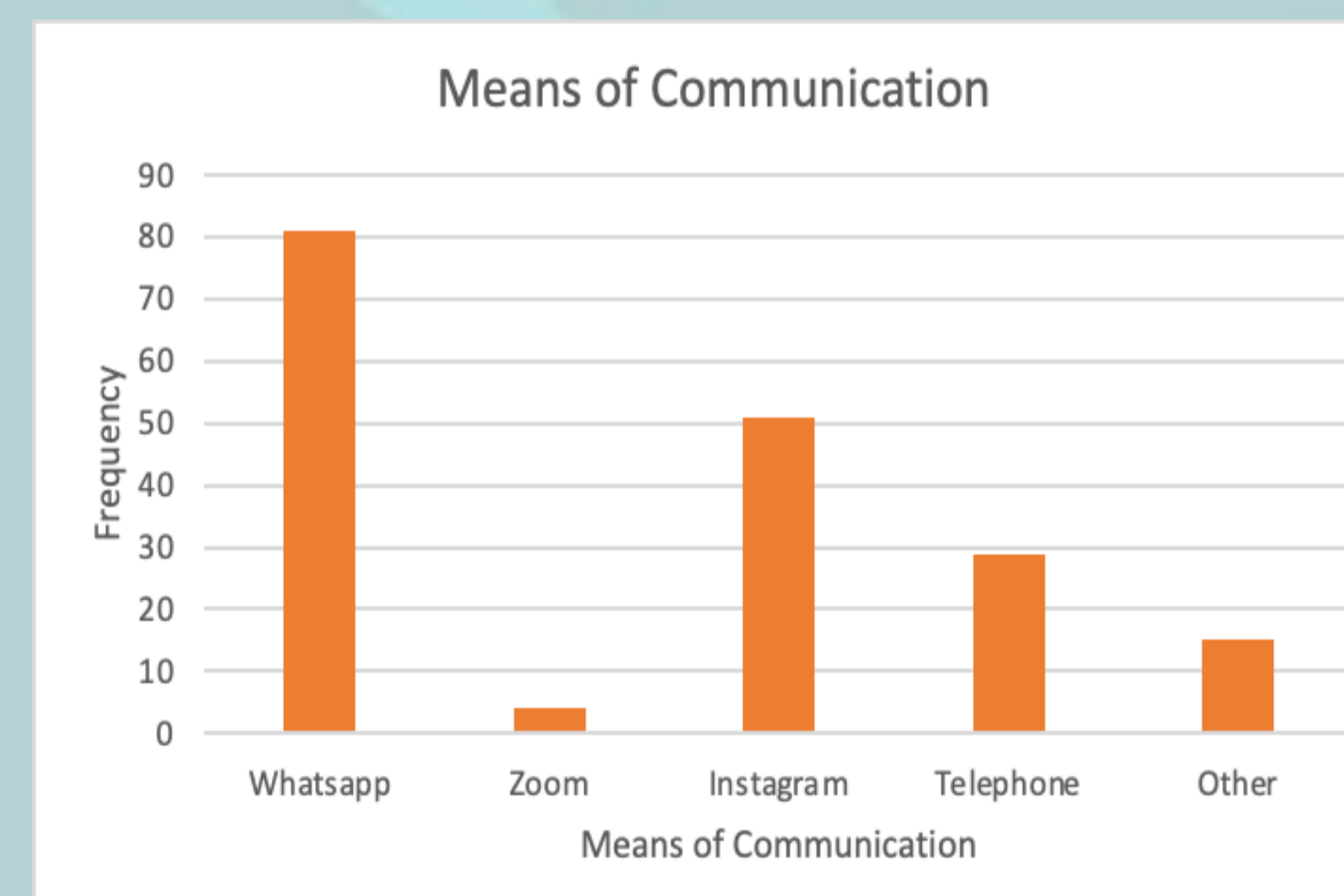


Figure 3 (above) shows the various means of communication among couples.

## Discussion

- Most respondents reported an increased frequency of relationship tension, arguments, or conflicts similar to reports by (Luetke et al., 2020).
- Consistent with findings from (Luetek et al, 2020) , both single and non-single respondents reported a decrease in physical affection.
- An increased use of dating apps by singles was observed which coincided with findings from (Coombe J et al, 2020).
- Females revealed a higher incidence of anxiety compared to males as reported by (Özdin et al, 2020).
- LGBTQ members reported higher levels of anxiety and depression comparable to findings from (Suen et al., 2020).

## Conclusion

Findings show that the frequency of tension, arguments or conflict increased among couples. The use of video calls, phone calls & messaging for communication has increased. To add, social media apps (WhatsApp, Instagram, etc) were the main means of communication for dating/relationships during the pandemic. Furthermore, the study findings highlighted a greater risk among young women for anxiety, non-heterosexuals for both depression & anxiety & single youths for loneliness. Whether single or in a relationship, it would be beneficial for young adults to use the time during the pandemic to work on improving communication, staying connected with peers and/or develop a healthy routine in order to mitigate the psychosocial impact of COVID-19.

## References

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- Significant gender difference with anxiety with females reporting higher incidence compared to males.
- No significant difference with loneliness & depression between males & females
- Significant difference -LGBTQ persons having higher incidence of anxiety compared to heterosexuals
- For depression, more LGBTQ persons showed more signs of depression than heterosexuals
  - Both groups showed similar levels of loneliness.