

## Covid-19 Associated Stress and Coping Strategies

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**Abstract :** The study examined how 811 Israelis experienced and coped with the COVID-19 lockdown. Stress, uncertainty, and loss of control were reported as common emotional experiences. Two main difficulties were reported: Loneliness and health and emotional concerns. Frequent explanations for the virus's emergence were: scientific or faith reasoning. The most prevalent coping strategies were distraction activities and acceptance. Reducing the use of maladaptive coping strategies has important implications for mental health outcomes. Objectives: COVID-19 has been recognized as a collective, continuous traumatic stressor. The present study examined how individuals experienced, perceived, and coped with this traumatic event during the lockdown in Israel in April 2020. Method: 811 Israelis (71.3% were women; mean age 43.7, SD=13.3) completed an online semi-structured questionnaire consisting two sections: In the first section, participants were asked to report background information. In the second section, they were asked to answer 8 open-ended questions about their experience, perception, and coping with the covid-19 lockdown. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was assured, they were not offered compensation of any kind. The data were subjected to qualitative content analysis that seeks to classify the participants' answers into an effective number of categories that represent similar meanings. Our content analysis of participants' answers extended far beyond simple word counts; our objective was to try to identify recurrent categories that characterized participants' responses to each question. We sought to ensure that the categories regarding the different questions are as mutually exclusive and exhaustive as possible. To ensure robust analysis, the data were initially analyzed by the first author, and a second opinion was then sought from research colleagues. Contribution: The present research expands our knowledge of individuals' experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms with continuous traumatic events. Reducing the use of maladaptive coping strategies has important implications for mental health outcomes.

**Keywords :** Covid-19, emotional distress, coping, continuous traumatic event

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