

Harmful stress-related couple processes during 1 year of the COVID-19 pandemic & lockdown: A longitudinal dyadic perspective

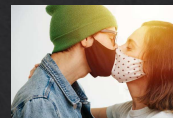


Galdiolo, S., Culot, S., Delannoy, P., Mauroy, A., Verhofstadt, L. L., & Gaugue, J.



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COVID-19 & the quality of couple relationships



- ◇ ↓ relationship satisfaction
- ◇ ↑ couples' conflicts
- ◇ ↑ physical & psychological violence
- ◇ ↓ sexual satisfaction

- ◇ ↑ couple adjustment & cohesion
- ◇ = couple satisfaction
- ◇ ↓ partners' blame

(Candel & Jitaru, 2021; Gleason et al., 2021; Jetelina et al., 2021; Luetke et al., 2020)

(Günther-Bel et al., 2020; Williamson, 2020)

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COVID-19 & couples' mechanisms



- ◆ Harmfull dyadic processes
- ◆ ↓ leisure time activities
- ◆ ↓ life satisfaction

(Goodboy et al., 2021; Pietromonaco & Overall, 2020; van der Velden et al., 2021)



- ◆ ↑ time together
- ◆ Dyadic coping

(Bar-Kalifa et al., 2021; Donato et al., 2021; Randall et al., 2022)

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COVID-19 pandemic & lockdown: Transitions



Abrupt transition:

Strict lockdown

From a normative life to a restricted life



Continuous transition:

Semi-lockdowns

Months later, the pandemic was always present

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The present study

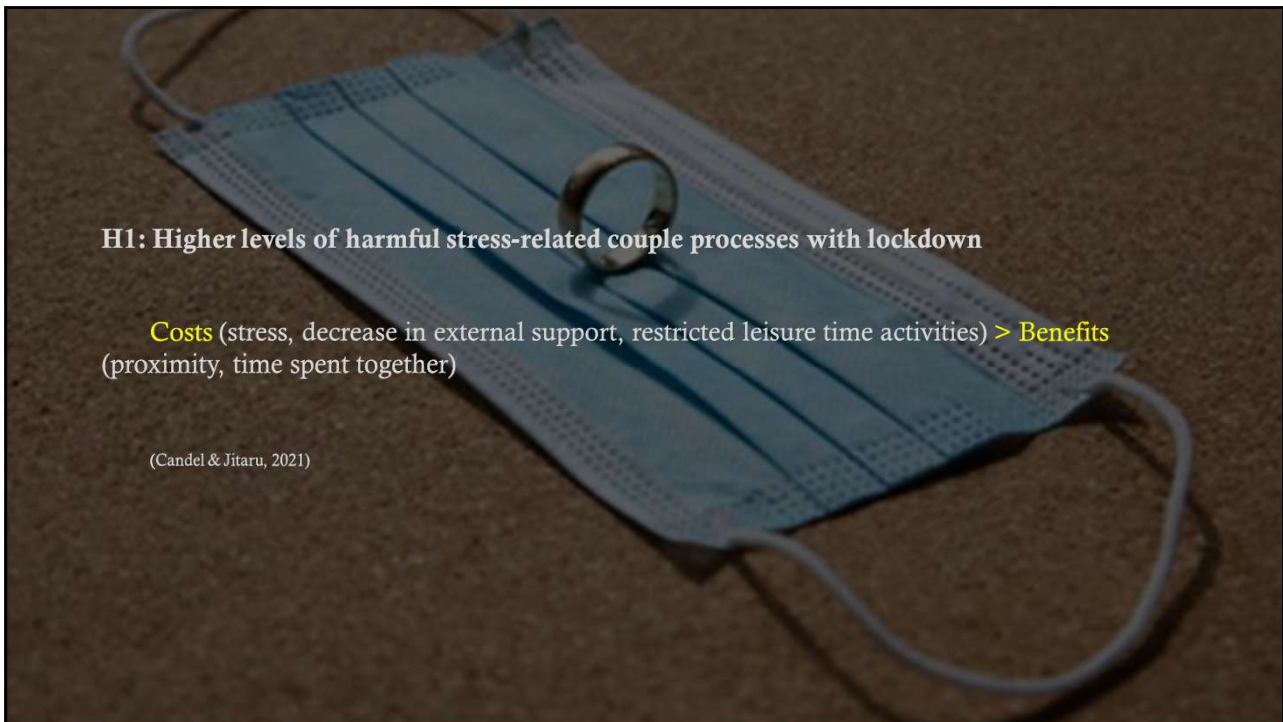


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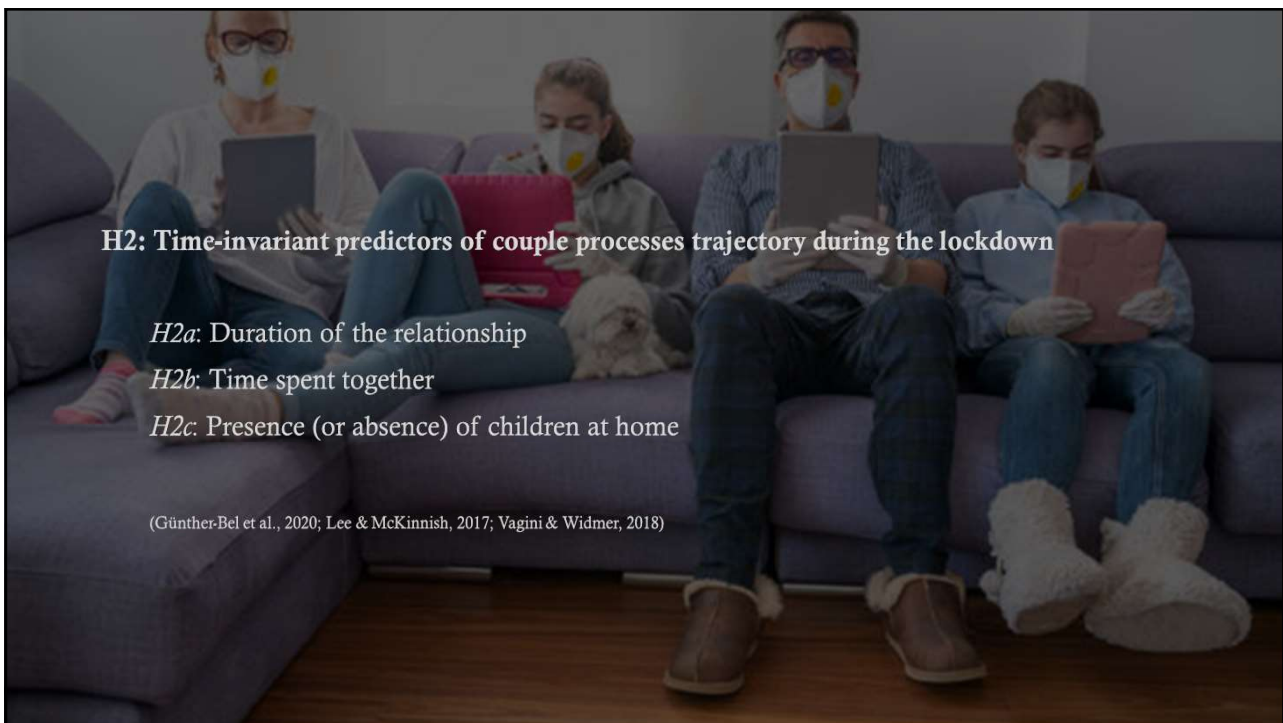
Focus on the strict lockdown



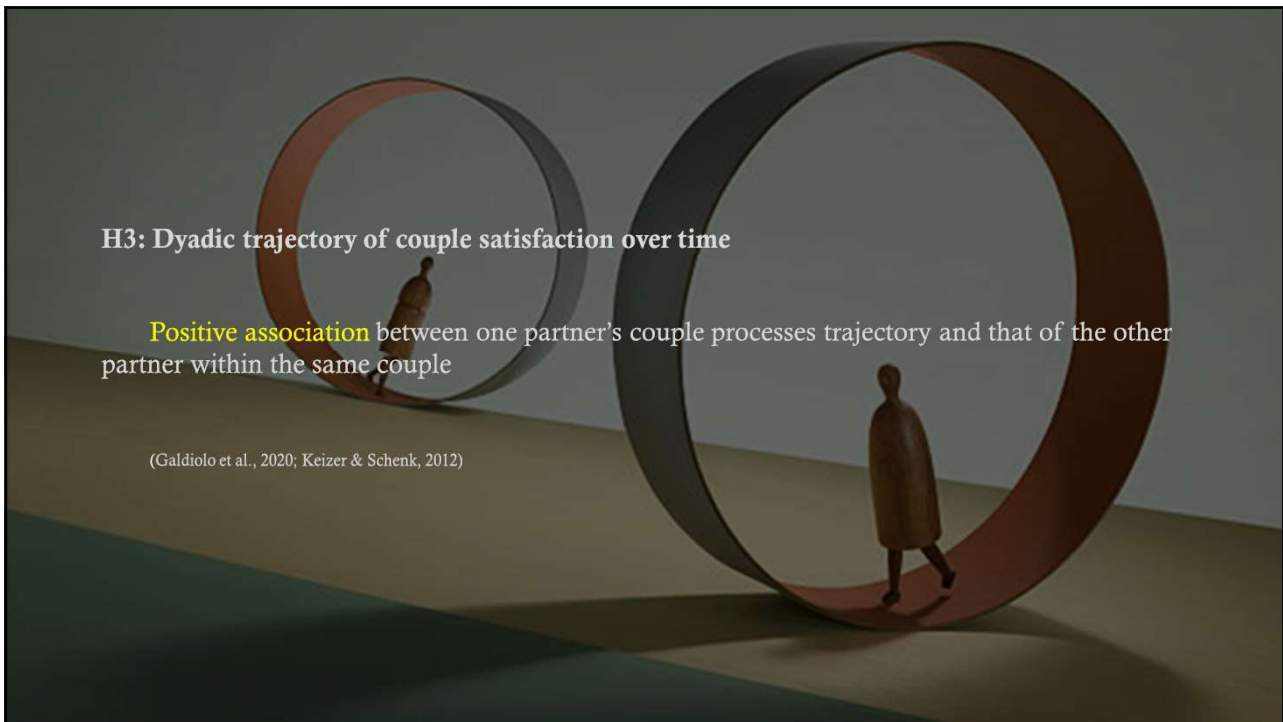
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Methods

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Participants

108 heterosexual couples

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Age | 18 – 74 years old ($M = 37.94$, $SD = 12.50$) |
| Parenthood | 54.6% of parents |
| Duration of the relationships | $M = 12.63$ years, $SD = 12.65$ |
| Time together during the lockdown | $M = 18.80$ hours a day, $SD = 6.97$ |

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Measures

| | |
|---|--|
| Harmful stress-related couple processes | <p>Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (Bodart et al., 2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship dissatisfaction (22 items; $\alpha = 0.96$) - Difficulties in Problem-solving Communication (19 items; $\alpha = 0.92$) - Aggression (10 items; $\alpha = 0.70$) - Conflicts over Children Rearing (10 items; $\alpha = 0.87$) |
| Perceived influence of the lockdown on couple and family relationships | <p>Positive and negative perception of the influence of the lockdown on their couple (5 items; $\alpha = 0.78$) and family (5 items; $\alpha = 0.88$) satisfaction</p> <p>e.g., <i>the lockdown allows me to get closer to my partner/family</i></p> |

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Analytical strategy

| Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (multilevel modeling) | |
|---|--|
| Outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship dissatisfaction - Difficulties in problem-solving communication - Aggression - Conflicts over children Rearing - Perceived influence of the lockdown on couple and family |
| Time-invariant predictors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Couple duration - Number of hours spent together - Presence of children at home |
| Time-varying covariate | The partner's couple processes |

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Results

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Actor-partner interdependence model

| ** $P < .001$ * $p < .05$ | Relationship Dissatisfaction | Difficulties in Problem-solving Communication | Aggression | Conflicts over Children Rearing | Perceived Influence of the Lockdown on Couple | Perceived Influence of the Lockdown on Family |
|--|---|--|-------------------|--|--|--|
| Slope (weeks) | -0.09(.01)** | -0.13(.01)** | -0.12(.01)** | -0.09(.01)** | 0.28(.03)** | 0.26(0.3)** |
| APIM | 0.05(.00)** | 0.05(.00)** | 0.07(.01)** | 0.06(.01)** | 0.08(.01)** | 0.07(.01)** |
| Duration of the relationship | -0.00(.00) | -0.00(.00) | -0.00(.00) | -0.00(.00) | 0.002(.00)* | 0.002(.00)* |
| Children at home | -0.00(.00) | -0.00(.00) | 0.00(.00) | - | -0.00(.00) | - |
| Hours together | 0.00(.00) | 0.00(.00) | 0.00(.00) | 0.00(.00) | -0.003(.00)* | -0.00(.00) |

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What about one year later?

Time 5

Beginning of the lockdown + 55 weeks



Galdiolo, S., Culot, S., Delannoy, P., Mauroy, A., & Gaugue, J. (2022). Couple satisfaction during 1 year of the COVID-19 pandemic: Dyadic coping as a protective factor. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice, 11*(3), 232 – 243. doi: 10.1037/cfp0000230

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Measures

| | |
|--|--|
| Harmful stress-related couple processes | <p>Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised (Bodart et al., 2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship dissatisfaction (22 items; $\alpha = 0.96$) - Difficulties in Problem-solving Communication (19 items; $\alpha = 0.92$) - Aggression (10 items; $\alpha = 0.70$) - Conflicts over Children Rearing (10 items; $\alpha = 0.87$) |
| Dyadic coping | <p>Dyadic Coping Inventory (Bodenmann, 2008) ($\alpha = .87$)</p> <p>= Participants' perceptions of their own & partners' coping behaviors when they are experiencing stress</p> <p>e.g., I tell my partner openly how I feel and that I would appreciate his/her support My partner tells me openly how he/she feels and he/she would appreciate my support</p> |

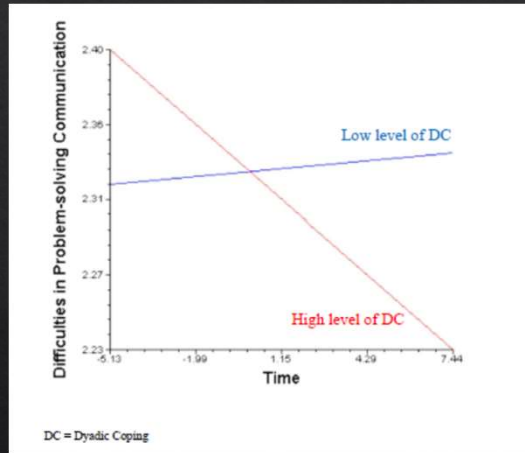
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Actor-partner interdependence model

| | Relationship Dissatisfaction | Difficulties in Problem-solving Communication | Aggression | Conflicts over Children Rearing |
|---|------------------------------|---|------------|---------------------------------|
| *** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$ | | | | |
| Slope (Linear) | 0.01(.00)** | -0.00(.01) | 0.00(.00) | 0.00(.00) |
| Slope (Quadratic) | 0.001(.00)* | -0.00(.00) | 0.00(.00) | 0.00(.00) |
| Duration of the relationship | -0.00(.00) | 0.00(.00) | 0.00(.00) | 0.00(.00) |
| Children at home | 0.69(.00) | 0.01(.01) | 0.00(.00) | - |
| Dyadic coping | -0.02(.01)*** | -0.02(.01)* | -0.01(.00) | 0.01(.01) |

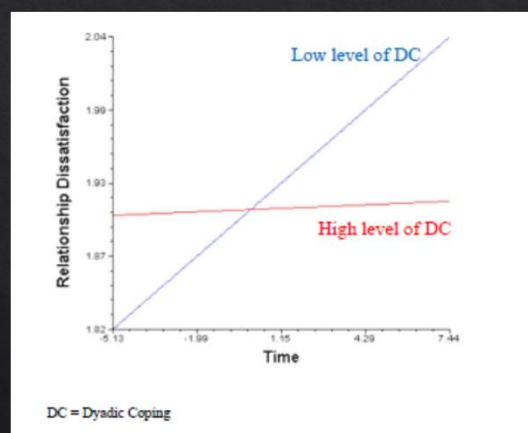
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Conditional model with **dyadic coping** as a predictor of change
in **Difficulties in Problem-Solving Communication**



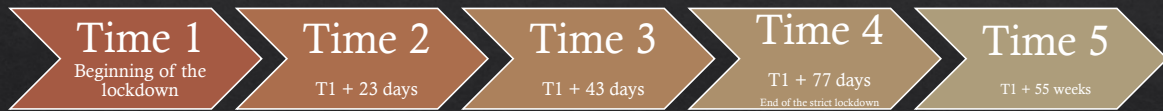
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Conditional model with **dyadic coping** as a predictor of change
in **Relationship Dissatisfaction**



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Togetherness & Separateness



We-ness or togetherness

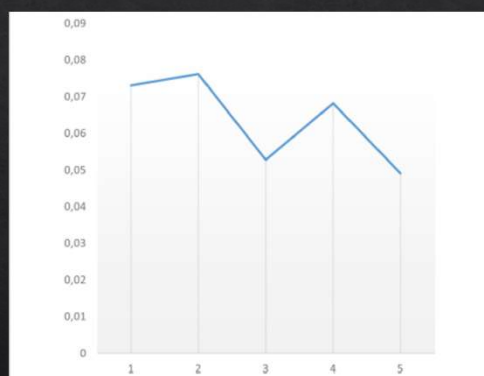
« **We** spend more time together »

Separateness

« **My** partner is always on **his** smartphone »

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Quadratic changes in we-ness during one-year COVID-19 pandemic



We-ness (-0.002*, 0.00)

Separateness (0.00, 0.00)

* $p < .001$

Figure 1. Quadratic changes in we-ness in the positive interactional context during one-year COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.

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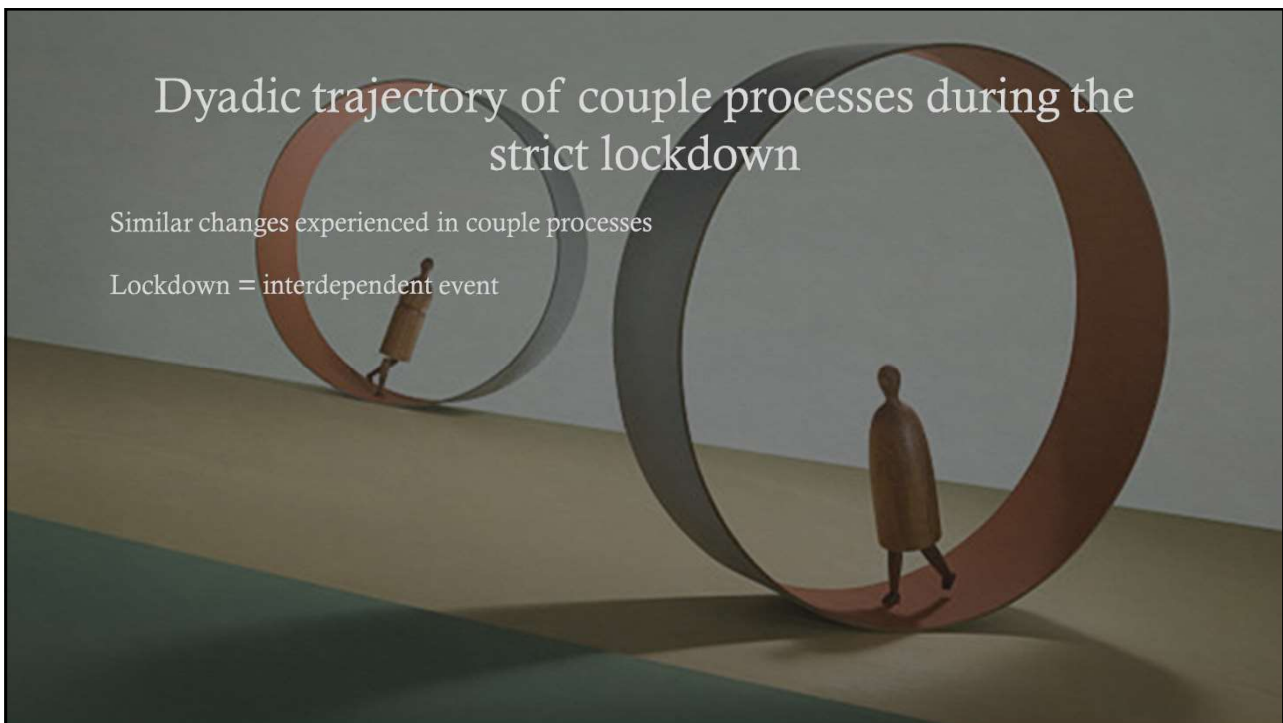
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One-year of COVID-19 lockdown

No dramatic change in couple processes

< Partners blame each other less & consider the stress of the pandemic for explaining negative partners' behaviors

Return to the baseline

< Adaptation to life events (e.g., Dyrdal & Lucas, 2013): short-term reactions to life events

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One-year of COVID-19 lockdown

Slight increase in Relationship Dissatisfaction

Importance of couple leisure activities

< chronic stress wearing out couple's resources

Slight decrease in we-ness/togetherness

< chronic stress undermines couple synchrony, affecting couple's sense of we-ness (Pauly et al., 2021)

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Dyadic coping as a buffer factor

Predictor of change in partners' **Relationship Dissatisfaction & Difficulties in Problem-solving Communication**

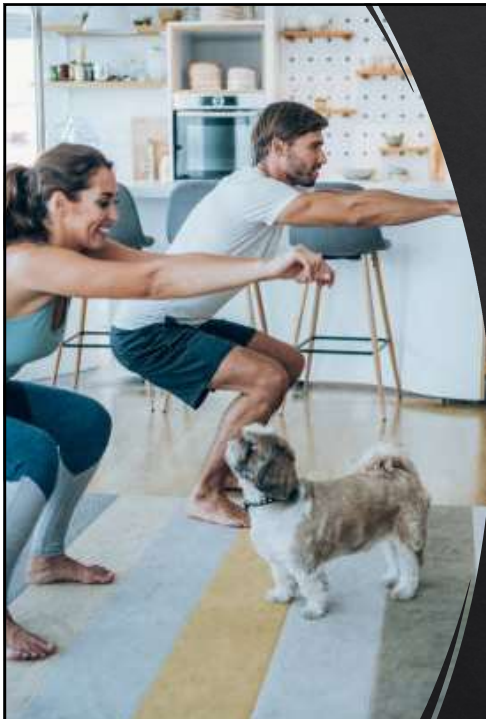
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Limitations

- ◆ Sample size
- ◆ Selection bias
- ◆ No comparison between pre- and post-lockdowns

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Lessons from the lockdown experience

- ◆ Protective factors
 - ◆ Couple & family time
 - ◆ Promoting partners' DC competences = A way to enhance partners' effectiveness for resolving daily problems & satisfaction over the couple relationship

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Thank you!

Galdiolo, S. et al. (2022a, b, c, d).

(a) Harmful stress-related couple processes during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown: A longitudinal dyadic perspective.

Frontiers in Psychology, 13, 819854. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.819874

(b) How do we live together during a lockdown? Study of couple and parental satisfaction. *Trends in Psychology*.

doi: 10.1007/s43076-022-00146-x

(c) Couple satisfaction during one-year of the COVID-19 pandemic : Dyadic coping as a protective factor.

Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice.

(d) Couples' we-ness and separateness during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown: A longitudinal perspective.

Journal of Language and Social Psychology.

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