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Exploring Identity Development and Optimism in the Pandemic Era: A Phenomenological Analysis of Greek University Students

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Abstract

While transitioning within a period of proactive exploration of adult responsibilities, university students face the psychosocial task of developing a coherent identity. The emergence of COVID-19 and the sequelae of restrictive measures may have probably disrupted this normative transition. The purpose of this cross-cultural study was to evaluate the impact of this health crisis on young Greek university students, to evaluate the levels of anxiety and psychological instability and to provide insight into the developmental repercussions of this global phenomenon. Purposefully we selected, only participants who had relocated from their temporary housing in the location they studied and moved back with parents or family. The analysis revealed five superordinate themes: Trapped in Adolescence, Diffused Individuals, Rumination, Developmental and Mental Health Considerations and Positive Adaptation after Negative Life Events. Findings are discussed so as to capture how such unique experiences impact mental and developmental outcomes since this health crisis is still ongoing.

Keywords: emerging adulthood, boomerang students, COVID-19, distress, identity fluctuations