

# Correlation Between COVID-19 Related Stress and Romantic and Intimate Relationships Among LGBTQ+ Individuals with ASD

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## Background and Context

- **Background:** COVID-19 stress correlate with low relationship satisfaction. People with ASD report difficulty managing relationships, poor relationship outcomes, and more often report having an LGBTQ+ identity.
- **Significance:** It is important to explore the intersectionality of LGBTQ+ people with ASD as it relates to COVID-19 stress and relationship outcomes as it has overlooked.

## Research Purposes & Questions

- **Purpose:** Explore the correlations between stress during COVID-19 and romantic and intimate relationship satisfaction among LGBTQ+ individuals with ASD.
- **Research question:** What is the correlation between stress during COVID-19 and romantic and intimate relationship satisfaction for LGBTQ+ individuals with ASD?

## Research Methods

- **Research design:** Quantitative correlational survey design.
- **Data collection & analysis:** Occurred April-May of 2021. IBM SPSS Statistics 27, Pearson's *r*, & alpha level of .05.
- **Measures:** Online 15-20 min survey with demographics & items from Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21), Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), and Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS).

## Results

**Table 1.** Demographic Data of the Participants (N= 93)

Characteristic	n	%
Age	93	
Professional (Clinical or School) Diagnosis of ASD		
Yes	66	69.5
No	29	30.5
Current Gender Identity		
Female	39	41.1
Male	41	43.2
Transgender Woman/Transgender Female	2	2.1
Transgender Man/Transgender Male	2	2.1
Non-binary, agender, gender fluid, or genderqueer	10	10.5
No answer	1	1.1
Sex Assigned at Birth		
Female	50	52.6
Male	45	47.4
Sexual Attraction		
Only attracted to femininity	4	4.2
Mostly attracted to femininity	28	29.5
Equally attracted to femininity & masculinity	19	20.0
Mostly attracted to masculinity	19	20.0
Only attracted to masculinity	16	16.8
Not attracted to femininity or masculinity	6	6.3
Somewhat equal attraction to femininity & masculinity	1	1.1
Not sure	1	1.1
No answer	1	1.1
Intimate Relationship History		
Men only	32	33.7
Women only	41	43.2
Both men & women	19	20.0
Men, women, & non-binary or mostly non-binary	3	3.2

Note. N = 93. Participants were on average 27.03 years old (SD = 4.74)

**Table 2.** Correlation Between DASS-21, RAS, and ISS

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
1. DASS-21 Depression Scale	1				
2. DASS-21 Anxiety Scale	.762**	1			
3. DASS-21 Stress Scale	.775**	.735**	1		
4. RAS	-.162	-.232*	-.121	1	
5. ISS	.279**	.450**	-.153	-.315**	1

Note. DASS-21 = Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale, RAS = Relationship Assessment Scale, ISS = Index of Sexual Satisfaction.

\**p* < .05

\*\**p* < .01

## Discussion and Conclusion

- High anxiety & depression correlate with low romantic & intimate relationship satisfaction. High romantic relationship satisfaction correlate with high sexual satisfaction.
- **Implications to occupational therapy (OT):** Romantic & intimate relationships are important occupations. Results can inform OT interventions in addressing anxiety & depression to support relationship satisfaction.
- **Limitations:** Measures N/A to asexual & polyamory. Lack of contextual data on COVID-19 & restrictions.

## Next Steps / Future Directions

- Sensitive assessments that capture LGBTQ+ experience.
- Impact of mental health OT on relationship satisfaction.
- Research mental health & relationship satisfaction with contextual data related to COVID-19 and its restrictions.

## References

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2020). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (4th ed.). *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74(Suppl. 2), 7412410010. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.74S2001>  
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## Acknowledgements

This poster presentation was supported by California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH).