



STILL EXPERIENCING PANDEMIA - AN EXPLORATION OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT OF CHANGES IN LIFESTYLE AND WELLBEING DURING 2020 AND 2021 IN ARGENTINA

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ABSTRACT

AIM

The aim of the present study is to explore on the psychosocial impact in lifestyle during COVID - 19 Pandemia,exploring socio-demographic variables, changes in lifestyle, risk behaviors, coping strategies, belief systems, fears,anguish and hopes, anxiety, depression, and the level of General Well-being.

METHODS

Administration of an online survey during 2020, 2021 and 2022, containing open and closed questions, and two measures to evaluate General Well-being, Anxiety and Depression, both validated and standardized in Argentina, namely the Remoralization Scale and the BDI II. This is a longitudinal study, for data analysis, quantitative methods were utilized to study frequencies and correlations, and qualitative methods to analyze response categories to open questions.

RESULTS

Preliminary results were presented in SPR 2021, N=1020 subjects, regarding differences in anxiety and depression between different populations between people working in the health care systems versus not working in the health care system and weight gain issues.

DISCUSSION

One of the surprising conclusions of the first survey, was the difference in belief systems regarding attitudes towards the vaccines, the sanitary measures and conspiracy theories in General Population. Therefore, and after the vaccines started to roll out, we conducted a 2nd and slightly modified survey, in order to address changes in the way people experience Pandemia, and particularly the relationship between different belief systems,depression, anxiety and wellbeing. Argentina has a relatively high percentage of vaccinated people and positive attitude towards vaccines. How is it related to other aspects? Preliminary results of this ongoing study are presented.

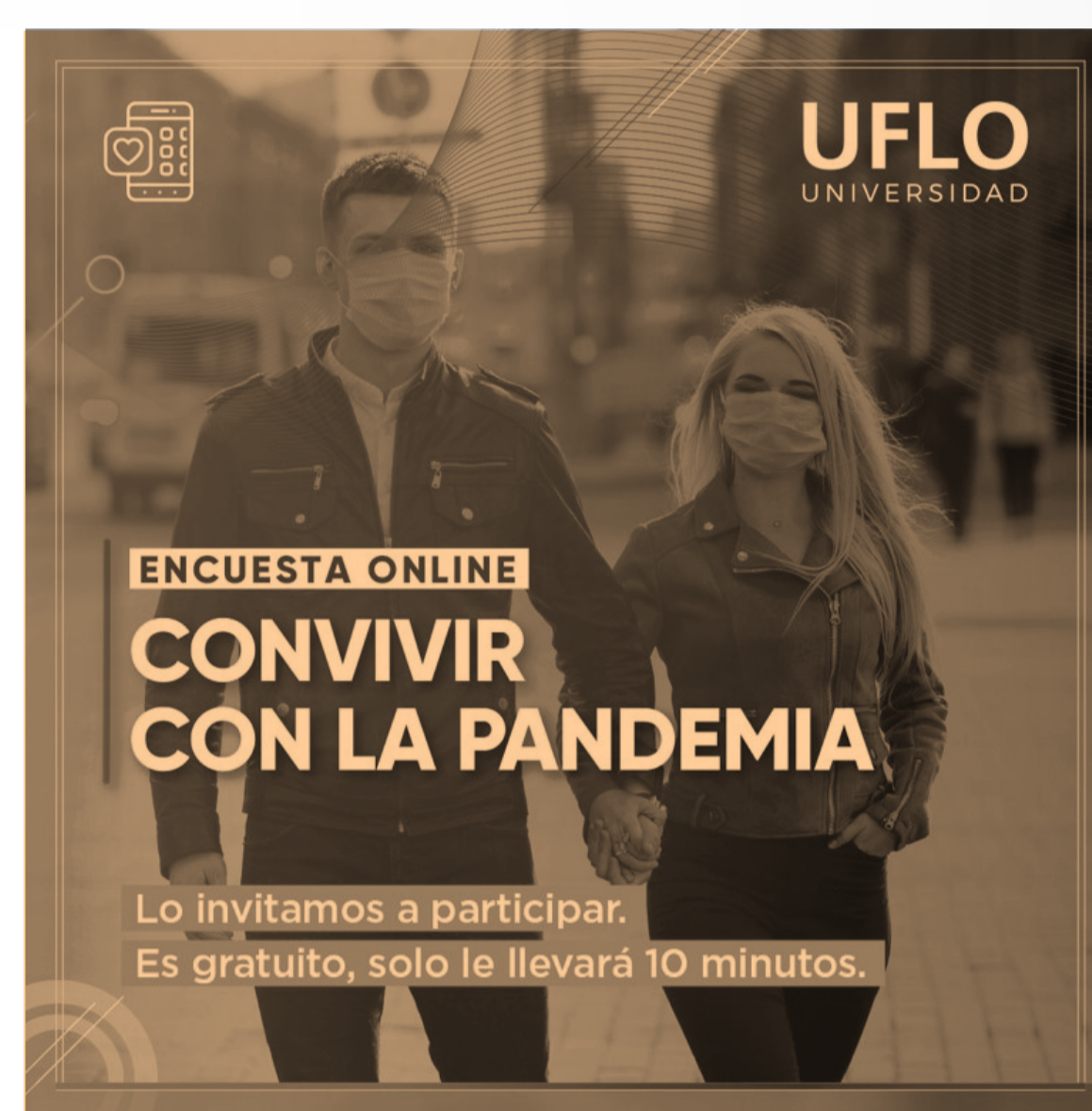
THE RESEARCH

First Questionnaire
N=1020
Dates: 10/28/20 to 1/17/21
Vaccine situation: no vaccines

Second Questionnaire
N=340
Dates: 11/23/21 to 04/03/22
Vaccine situation: 80% of the population has been vaccinated at least one dosis. Sanitary measures are starting to relax.

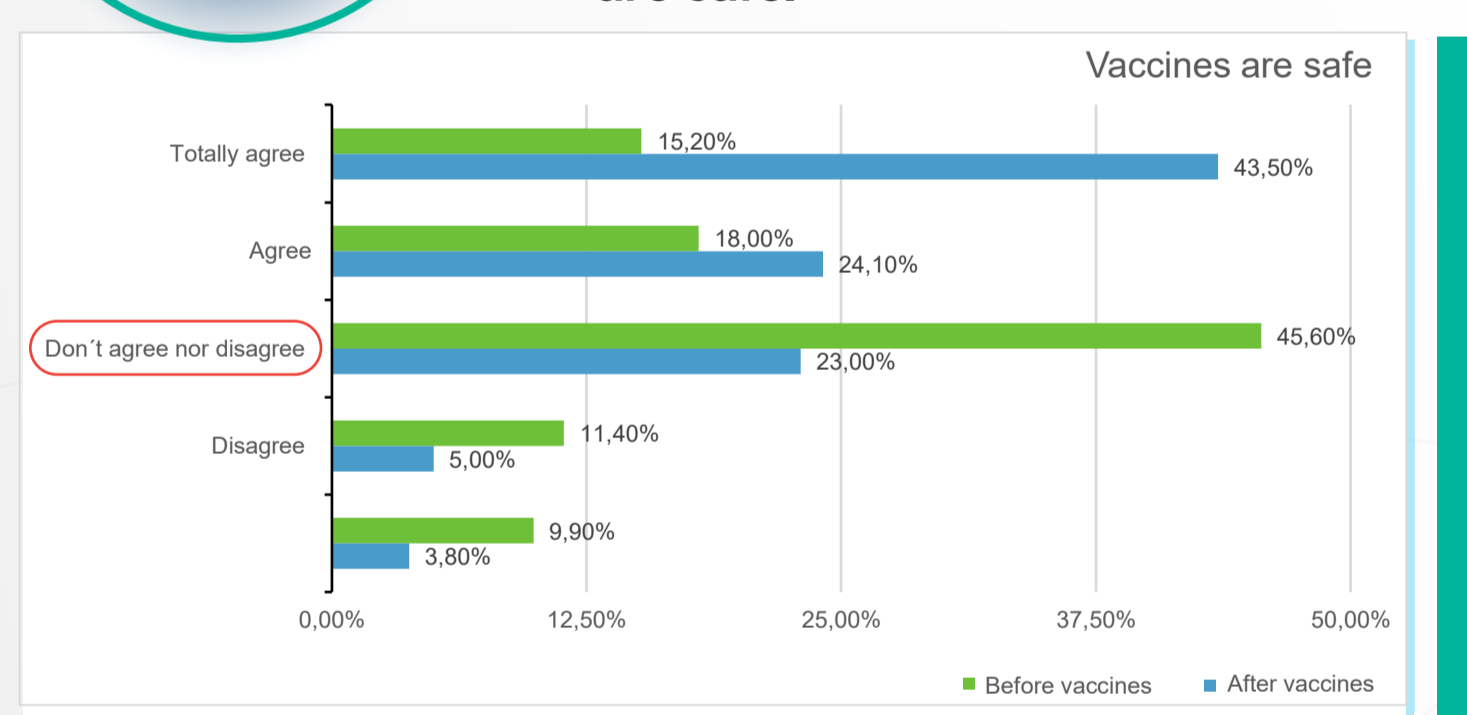
BELIEFS ABOUT THE PANDEMIC

- The COVID -19 Pandemic does not exist, it is a manipulation of the Governments VERSUS The COVID-19 Pandemic is a problem generated by a new virus for which there are still no drugs or vaccines and must be solved jointly by science and public policies.
- The preventive and restrictive measures of the different States in the face of the Pandemic are a new world dictatorship to manipulate people's freedom VERSUS Preventive and restrictive measures of the different States in the face of the Pandemic are the best way to take care of people's health.
- The mask is a cause of diseases VERSUS The mask is an effective preventive measure to reduce the spread of the virus
- The vaccine is dangerous VERSUS The vaccine is safe
- COVID-19 deaths are caused by the new coronavirus VERSUS COVID-19 deaths are due to other causes and are reported as COVID .



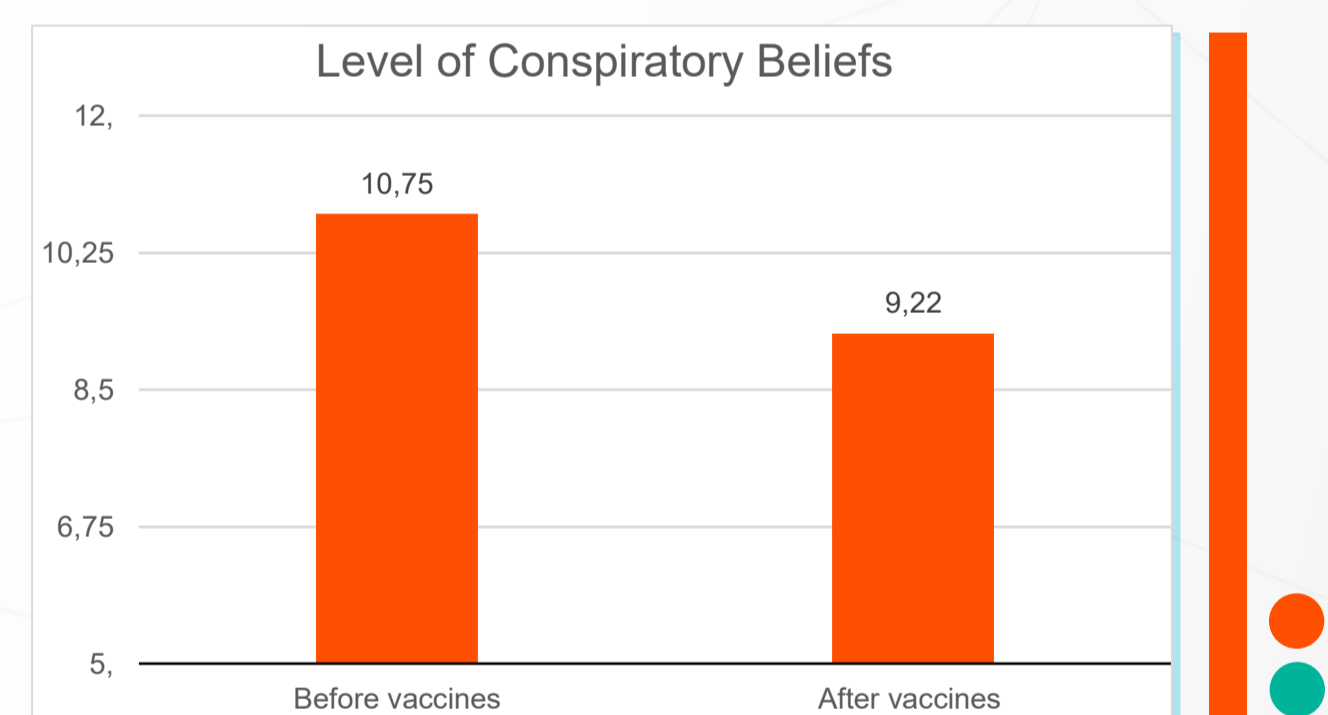
1st. Question ?¿

Did belief systems and attitudes towards vaccines changed before vaccines roll - out and after?
The answer is YES, but, still, 23% of people is not sure whether vaccines are safe.



2nd. Question ?¿

Since belief systems and attitudes are so relevant to the compliance with sanitary measures designed to put an end to the Pandemia, at least, from an epidemiological perspective, did the of amount of people that distrust the Pandemia narrative changed before and after the vaccine roll - out?
The answer is YES, but still there is a high proportion of subjects that adhere to these beliefs (from median 10.75 to median 9.22) .



3rd. Question ?¿

Several studies and this one included, have confirmed a positive correlation between BDI II and Remoralization Scale, the more Depression, the less Remoralization.

Table 1.
Relations between depression and remoralization dimensions

	1	2	3
1. BDI-II	.81	-.588**	-.681**
2. Self-concept		.76	.724**
3. Self-satisfaction			.80

Note: Cronbach's alpha in diagonal.

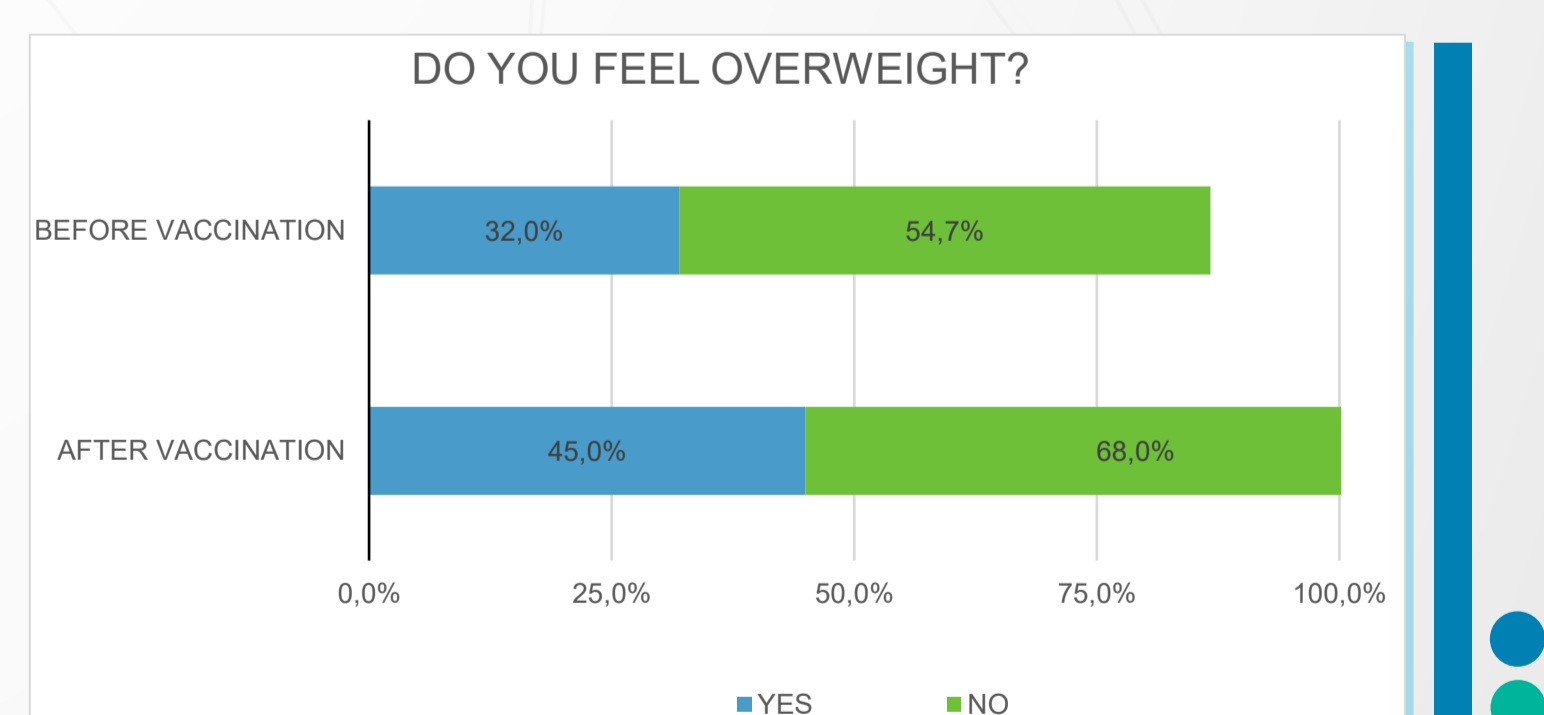
Is the percentage of subjects high in conspiratory ideas correlated with Depression or Remoralization?

	1.	2.	3.
1. Depresión	1	-.690**	-.120**
2. Remoralización		1	-.115**
3. Creencias Conspirativas			1

The answer is YES, people that bare conspiratory beliefs is more related to higher rates in BDI and lower rates in Remoralization Scale.

4th. Question ?¿

During the first Questionnaire, in relation to changes in lifestyle, people reported having gained weight. Is this gain maintained 6 months later on?
The answer is YES, self perception of gained weight augmented after vaccination and relaxation of restrictive public health measures.



CONCLUSIONS

In 2019, The World Health Organization (WHO) listed vaccine hesitancy as one of the top 10 threats to world health. An abundance of research has emerged in the literature studying the potential role of social media in shaping attitudes regarding COVID-19 vaccination, as well as social media's role as an intervention platform to address vaccine hesitancy. A variety of different factors contributed to increased hesitancy, including having negative perception of vaccine efficacy, safety, convenience, and price. Some of the consistent socio-demographic groups that were identified to be associated with increased hesitancy included: women, younger participants, and people who were less educated, had lower income, had no insurance, living in a rural area, and self-identified as a racial/ethnic minority (Cascini et al, 2022).

We have shown in this research how vaccine hesitancy can be changed in face of effective-ness of vaccines, but still there is a percentage of people that remains hesitant. We have also shown that some people bare conspiratory belief systems, no matter the accuracy of the public health or government measures, that can be related to a sense of demoralization or depression.

The Remoralization Scale (Visser et al, 2010) has proven a reliable measure to address general well-being, and psychological interventions need to be further investigated in order to determine how can we improve trust in public health measures in order to tackle this and further Pan-demics to come. Resilience is a relevant factor and need to be seriously studies in how we can enhance and promote its development.

A novel scale is being built with the questions addressing conspiratory belief systems that promises be useful in further understanding of the role of belief systems in compliance with public health measures.

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