

# The Prevalence of Negative Coping Mechanisms and Its Association with The Health-Related Quality of Life of University Students: Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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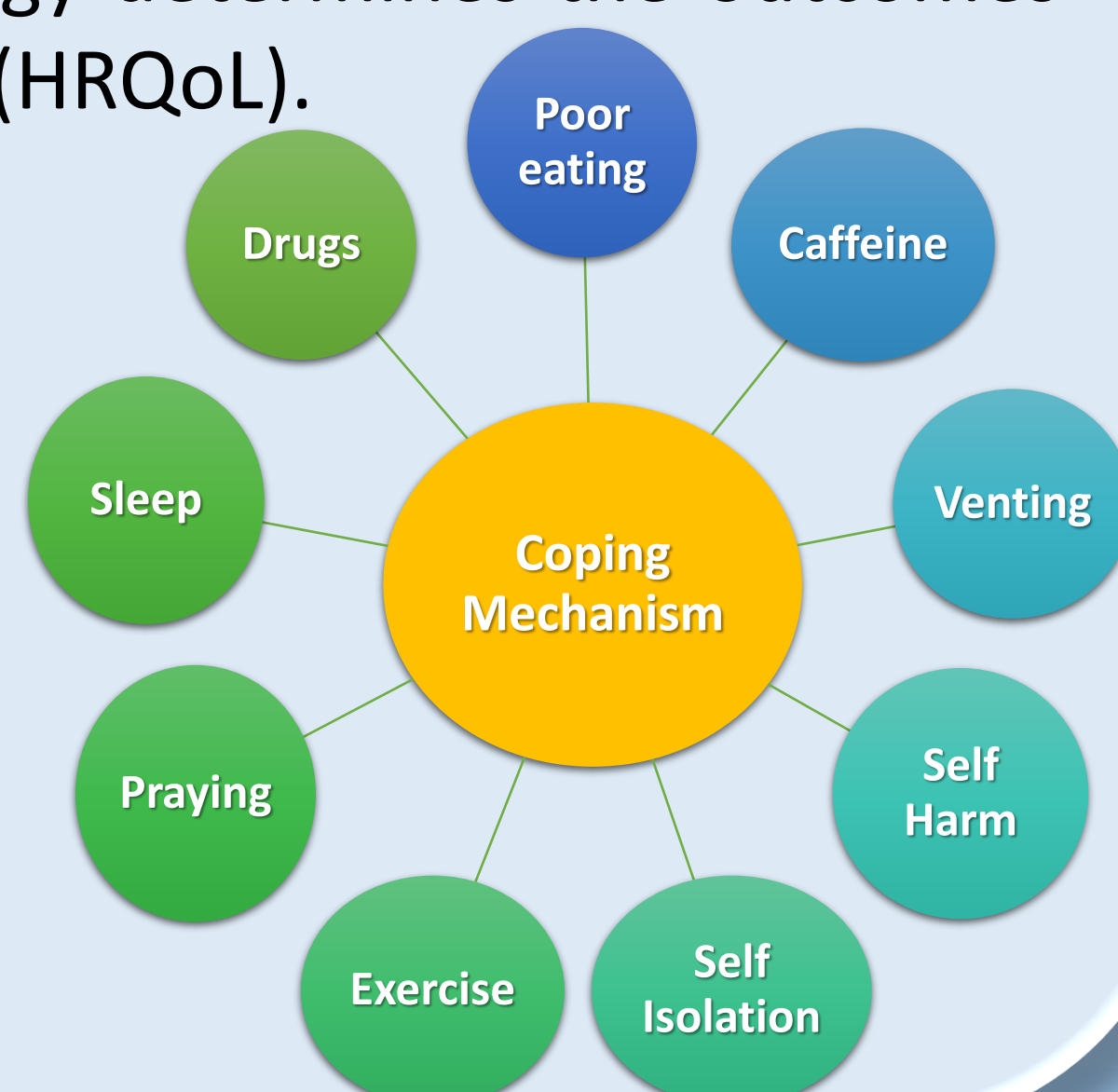
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## Introduction

Mental health of young adults has become a relevant matter amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals employ various coping mechanisms to deal with their stresses and mental health challenges. The type of coping strategy determines the outcomes of their Health-related Quality of Life (HRQoL).

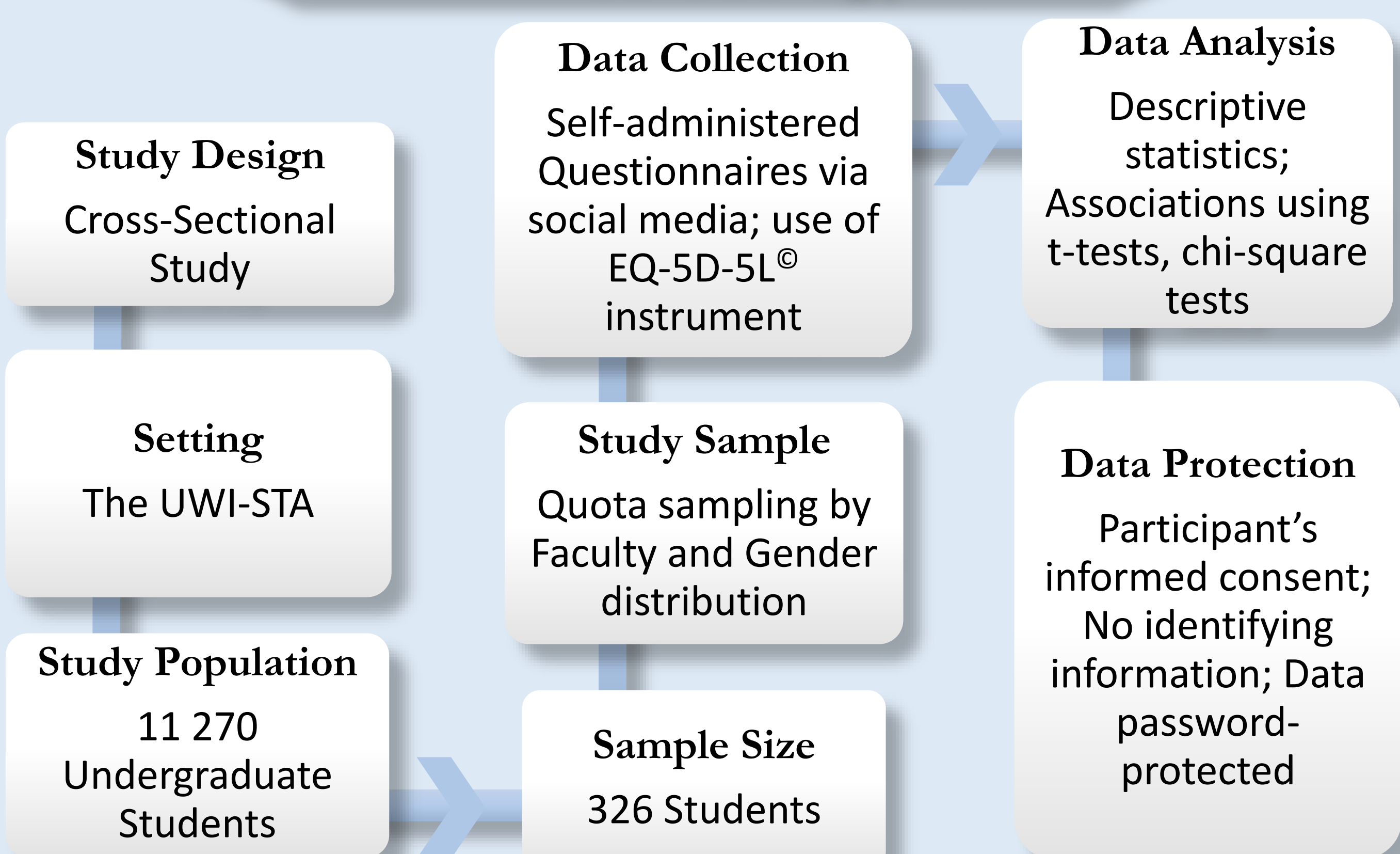
This study investigated the stressors of students at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus (UWI-STA) and how their coping mechanisms influenced their HRQoL during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Objectives

- To determine the prevalence of negative coping mechanisms utilized by The UWI-STA students.
- To determine the associated stressors.
- To measure the HRQoL of students.
- To examine the associations between coping mechanisms and HRQoL.

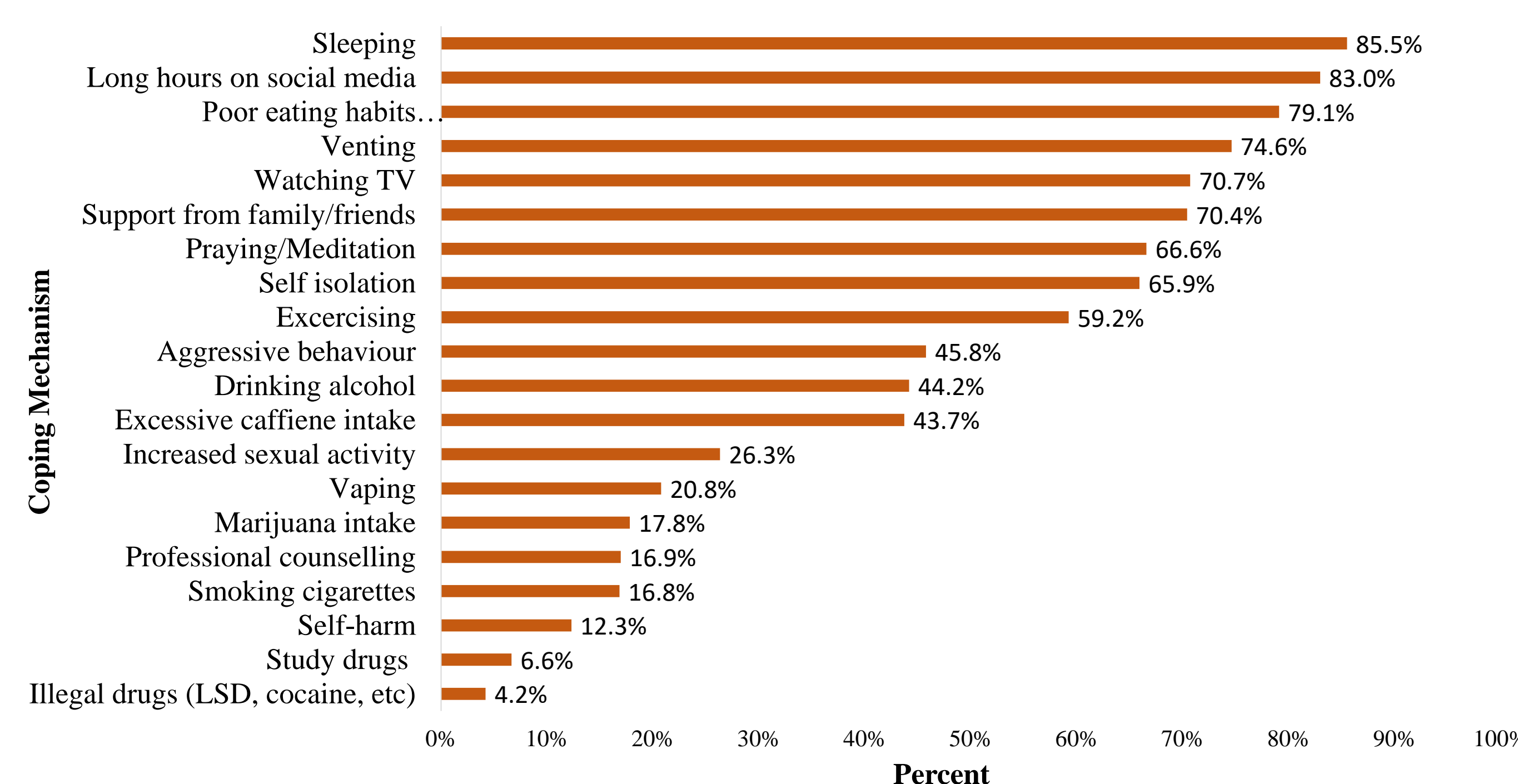
## Methodology



## Results

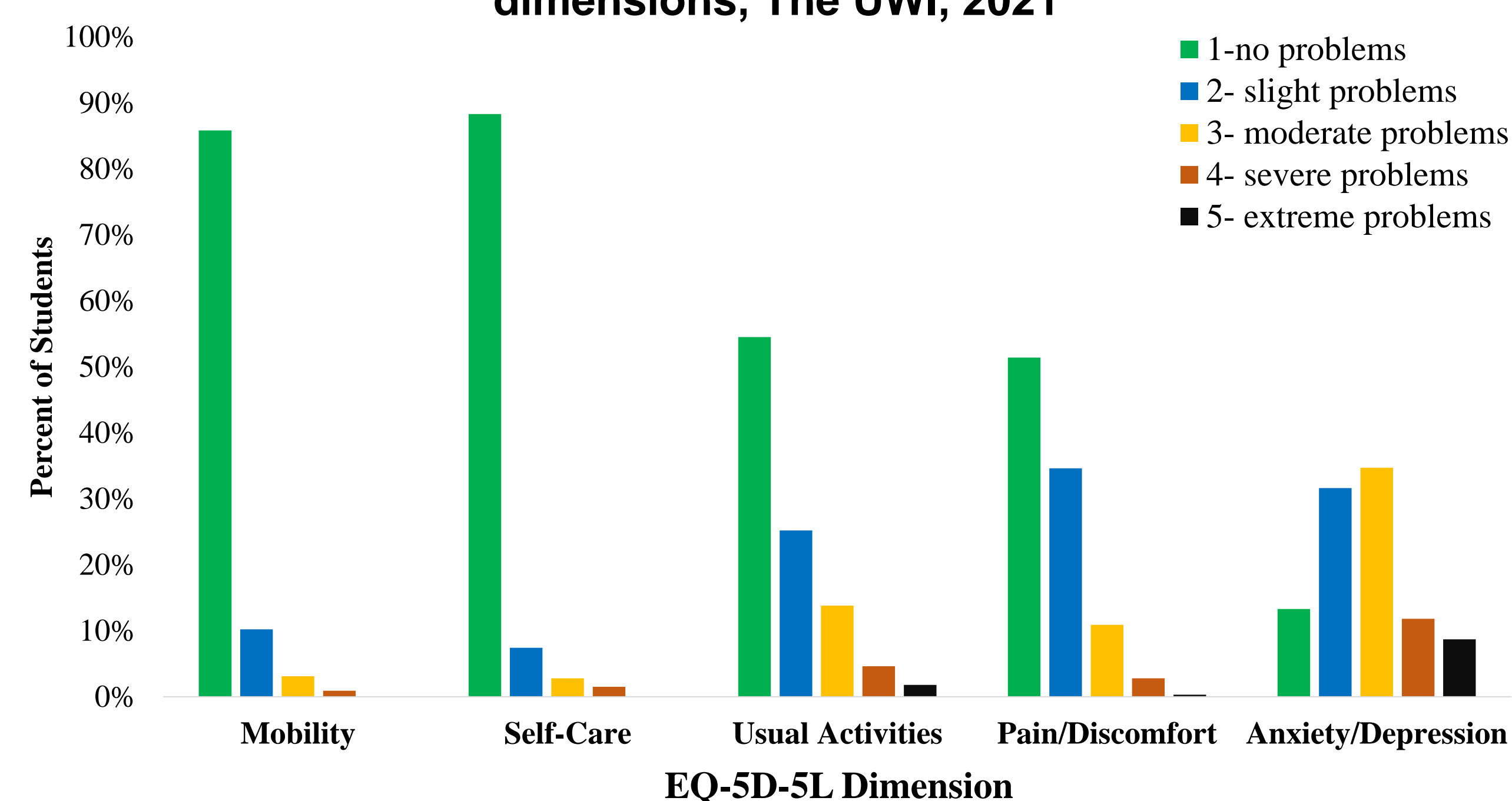
n = 326

**Figure 1: Coping mechanisms Used (sometimes/often/always) in the Past 6 months among Students, The UWI, 2021**



- Main Stressors:** Academic stress/coursework demands (96.9%) and Time management problems (90.3%).

**Figure 2: Students' Health-related Quality of Life by EQ-5D-5L® dimensions, The UWI, 2021**



- The most common EQ-5D-5L health states were **11113** (11.9%) and **11112** (11.6%). This reflects moderate and slight anxiety/depression respectively with no issue in the other four dimensions.
- The average EQ5D5L Index value was **0.83** (SD=0.109, 95% CI=0.818-0.843).
- The average EQ-VAS score was **69.5** (SD=19.4, 95% CI=67.4-71.6).
- Females had a significantly lower HRQoL compared to males: EQ-VAS score (66.4 vs 74.6) and Index value (0.81 vs 0.86) ( $p < 0.05$ ) respectively.
- Students who only used positive coping mechanisms had significantly higher HRQoL compared to those who used at least one negative coping mechanism: EQ-VAS scores (75.7 vs 68.1) and Index values (0.89 vs 0.82) ( $p < 0.05$  respectively).

## Discussion

- Frequency of Academic stressors in the online university environment have significantly increased because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The high prevalence of negative coping mechanisms among The UWI-STA students was consistent with students from other universities.
- 'Sleeping' had a prevalence rate twice that of a study conducted in The UWI, Cave Hill Campus.
- Prevalence of Substance use (alcohol, smoking, vaping, marijuana, drugs) was relatively low in this study; however, it was considerably higher compared to universities in New Zealand and Kenya: Smoking was two times higher and Marijuana use was nine times higher.
- Males employed more destructive coping strategies than females, consistent with multiple studies.
- HRQoL of The UWI-STA students was lower compared to the English-speaking Caribbean population norms, possibly due to the impact of the pandemic. Relationship between gender and HRQoL was consistent with these population norms.
- Due to the sampling strategy used (quota sampling), these results are not generalizable, a limitation of this study.

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in high prevalence of negative coping mechanisms and academic stressors amongst The UWI-STA students. Students have lower HRQoL compared to population norms of the English-speaking Caribbean, mainly having issues in the dimension of Anxiety/Depression. As such there is the need for appropriate student interventions.

## References

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## Acknowledgments

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