

In the most objective view, the COVID-19 pandemic is a total catastrophe, embedding all possible classes of stressors: traumas (e.g., health threats, death), life changing events (e.g., job loss, family conflicts), daily hassles (e.g., irritating daily routine changes), macro-system events (e.g., economic downturns), nonevents (e.g., cancelations of expected life milestones), and chronic stressors (e.g., non-resolving life difficulties). As the pandemic rages worldwide, with numbers of the morbidity and mortality growing, as well as anticipated recurrences of outbreaks, the psychological and social impact of this global disaster on Poles will continue for months, if not years, to come. We will assess the long-lasting socio-psychological consequences of COVID-19 in a sample of adult Poles to be interviewed 3 times, at 6 months intervals, starting in May 2021. The main purpose of this research is to address the following questions: What stressors spurred by the COVID-19 disaster activated individual and collective reactions, and influenced the long-term psychological and social well-being? What of these interpersonal and community processes can be identified as mechanisms explaining the COVID-19 impact on changes in social and psychological well-being? What person and environmental factors enhanced or diminished these relationships? These general issues will be examined from four distinctive theoretical and empirical perspectives: a) postdisaster communities, b) social support, c) social identity, and d) political orientations. There are many psychological and social resources and processes that empower humans to show resilience and recover successfully from calamities. Chief among them is the individual and collective capacity to protect, maintain and augment in times of adversity, the survivors' perceptions of being supported and belonging to a cohesive social group and community. Ultimately, the success or failure in coping with collective crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, depends, to a large extent, on interpersonal and social functioning.

Research on disasters describes the existence of two very different, and at times conflicting, social dynamics that routinely emerge in their aftermath. Immediately after the impact survivors, professional supporters and empathic witnesses rally to rescue, protect, and help each other ("altruistic community"). However, this heroic stage inevitably ceases. Initial generosity and togetherness are slowly overtaken by a gradual disillusionment and the harsh reality of grief, loss, and conflict ("erosion in social connections"). The COVID-19 pandemic is a disaster characterized by lack of consensus in its appraisals, insufficient legitimate information, abundance of misinformation, mistrust of authorities, and politicized community polarization and antagonization. Thus, the question is: which of the communities ("altruistic" or "antagonistic") will have dominated in Poland in the first months of the outbreak?

Social support is most often referred to as social interactions that provide individuals with actual assistance (received support) and embed them into a web of relationships perceived to be caring and readily available in times of need (perceived social support). It is a powerful resource protecting people's health and well-being in times of life difficulties. Perceived social support investigations dominate the literature, whereas studies of actual receipt of help after disasters are infrequent. Thus, more studies of actual help are necessary to assist practitioners guiding post-crisis aid processes and psychological interventions. We will ask what types of social support (emotional, informational, and tangible) were most frequently exchanged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Which person characteristics were associated with relative advantage, or disadvantage, in receiving/providing support? How quantity and quality of received social support influenced longer-term perceived social support and psychological well-being?

People's social identities, a product of belonging to a group such as family, neighborhood, political party, or cultural region are also critical determinants of health and well-being. We will ask to what extent different social group identifications influenced receiving and providing help as well as psychological well-being in the time of COVID-19. We recognize that disasters are political events with pressures for consensus in returning to the "status quo" versus opportunities for social change. Postdisaster politics typically moves toward increased support for conservatism and conformity to strong leadership. Hence, we will examine to what extent political outlooks, attitudes, and affiliations serve as protective or vulnerability factors in adjusting to the socio-political changes brought about by the COVID-19 crisis.

This broad analytical framework, based on established social science approaches to studying disasters, will offer recommendations for psychological interventions and inoculation against future calamities.