

# How Individuals Differ in Response to the COVID Crisis: The Role of Social Functioning

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## Introduction

In this research, we address the general question of how social functioning ability impacts people's reactions to the current COVID epidemic, economically, emotionally and socially.

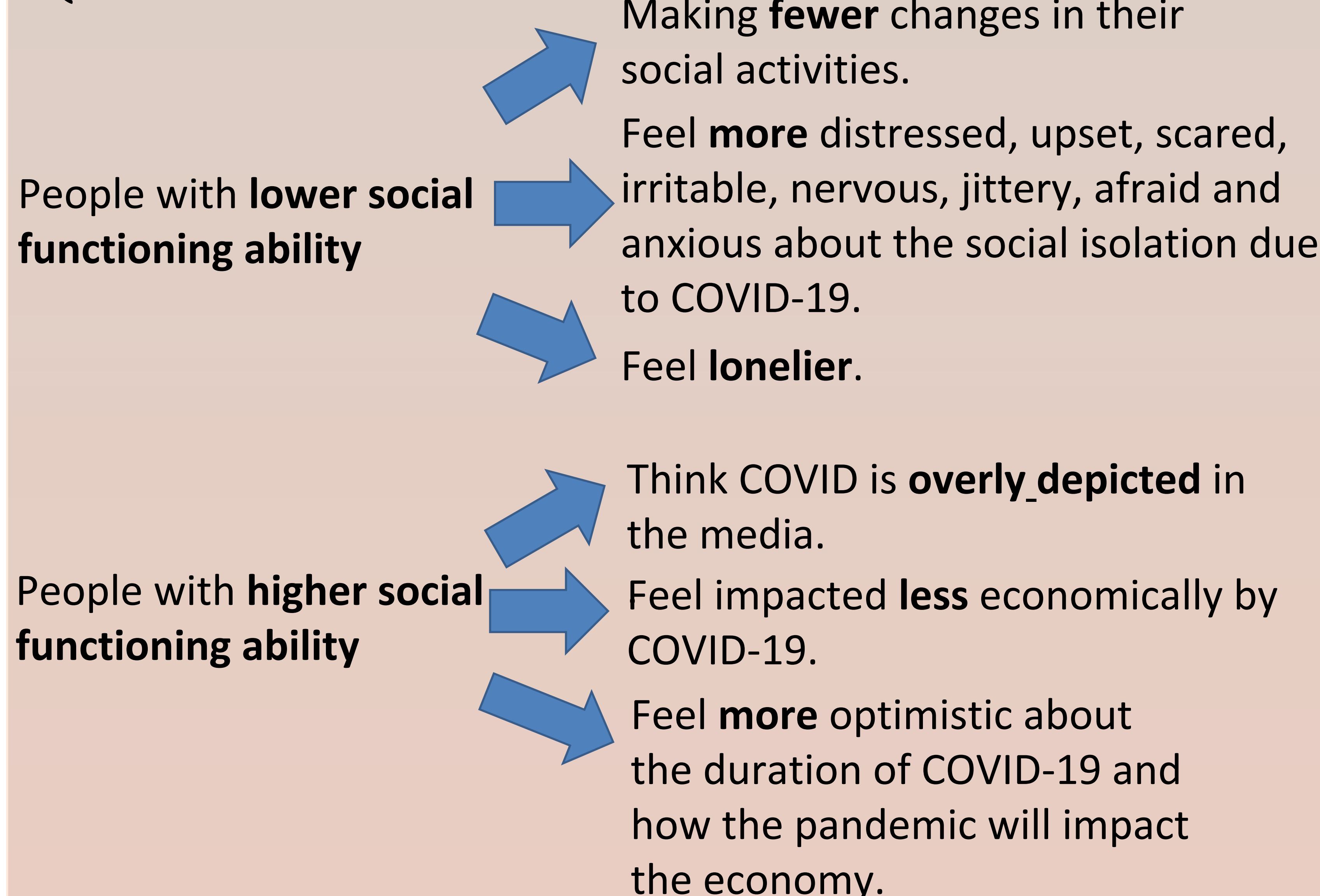
In our study we use both a sample of the "general population" as well as participants who are self-identified with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) as a way of extending the range of social functioning and using a new measure called Quality of Social Life Index (QSLI) to measure participants' social functioning ability. (Items include: How well did you get along with your fellow students?, How satisfied are you with your current employment environment?, How satisfied are you with your living arrangement? etc.)

## Methods

- 223 subjects recruited from Mturk, in two phases, one with the requirement that participants are self-identified as having ASD and one with no restrictions
- Participants answered the QSLI, then they answered questions relevant to how COVID-19 impacts their:
  - 1) Consumer Behavior
  - 2) Social Life
  - 3) Emotions towards Social Isolation

## Results

We correlate responses to each survey item with participants' QSLI scores and find:



**No difference** in how much people have socially isolated themselves.

## Discussion

In this study we provide strong evidence that individual differences occurring in reaction to the COVID epidemic are related to their social function ability.

People with lower social functioning ability make fewer changes in activities, possibly due to the lower baseline they experience.

We find those lower on social functioning react more negatively and are more pessimistic than those scoring higher. This suggests that those with poorer social-life quality feel even more impacted by a restricted social environment.

**Implications:** People who are already socially dissatisfied may be particularly vulnerable to the negative impact caused by isolation.

## Results

### Correlation between items and QSLI (n=223)

Item	r (n=223)	p-value
How much have you been socially isolating yourself due to the COVID-19?	0.295	P<0.01
Given the social isolation described above, how has it made you feel? (PANAS)		
Distressed	-0.205	P<0.01
Upset	-0.206	P<0.05
Scared	-0.164	P<0.05
Irritable	-0.255	P<0.01
Nervous	-0.260	P<0.01
Jittery	-0.365	P<0.01
Afraid	-0.227	P<0.01
Anxious	-0.279	P<0.01
Compared to your friends, how much have you socially isolated?	0.030	P>0.10
How lonely do you feel due to the COVID-19 outbreak?	-0.217	P<0.01
Do you feel the COVID-19 outbreak is accurately depicted in the media (news/social media)?	0.168	P<0.05
How impacted have you been economically by COVID-19?	-0.182	P<0.01
How many years do you think the infections from the COVID-19 outbreak will last?	-0.181	P<0.01
How many years do you think the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak will last?	-0.150	P<0.05

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