How are the Portuguese coping with the mandatory confinement by COVID-19? Association between mental health and coping strategies

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Aims

- Assess the mental health status of adults living in Portugal during the national lockdown of March 2020 to May 2020,
- Evaluate how study participants coped with stress during the national lockdown
- Assess the association between coping responses and mental health status

Method

- ✓ **Mental Health Inventory & Brief COPE**
- ✓ **Cross-sectional** online survey questionnaire

Participants

- ✓ N=430 lay people (71% women)
- ✓ Age **18 - 73 years old** ($M=39.9$, $SD=14.44$)
- ✓ Fifth to 12th grade (23%) or Higher education (76%)
- ✓ Single (48%) or Married (42%)
- ✓ **Employed** full-time or part-time (67%)
- ✓ Working in **telework** (67%)

Results

Mental health of study participants = 15 ($SD=4.48$), i.e., **lower than the cutoff point** for poor mental health [$t(429)=-27.67$; $p<.001$].

Most used coping strategies to deal with stress during the national lockdown:

- ✓ **acceptance** ($M=3.65$; $DP=1.42$)
- ✓ **planning** ($M=3.52$; $DP=1.43$)
- ✓ **active coping** ($M=3.3$; $DP=1.49$)

Least employed coping strategies to deal with stress during the national lockdown:

- ✓ **substance abuse** ($M=.39$; $DP=1.01$)
- ✓ **denial** ($M=.68$; $DP=1.03$)
- ✓ **behavioural disengagement** ($M=.75$; $DP=1.18$)

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Mental Health

	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔF	β
Step 1	.05	.05	11.17**	
Gender				-.19**
Age				-.11
Step 2	.06	.01	.89	
Unemployed (Yes)				-.05
Employed (Yes)				-.09
Student (Yes)				-.12
Retired (Yes)				-.10
Telework (Yes)				-.10
Step 3	.67	.30	12.88**	
Active coping				-.05
Planning				.09
Use of instrumental support				-.01
Use of emotional support				.04
Religion				.001
Positive reframing				-.29**
Self-blame				.11
Acceptance				-.10
Venting				.12
Denial				.11
Self-distraction				.06
Behavioural disengagement				.12
Substance use				.16**
Humour				-.12*

Conclusion

These coping responses should be **encouraged by healthcare professionals** and targeted in the context **psychosocial intervention programs** directed to the most **vulnerable populations**

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