



A LONGITUDINAL EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON A COHORT OF PATIENTS TREATED WITH CLOZAPINE

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Introduction

Three months into the COVID-19 pandemic the impact on individuals with treatment-resistant psychotic disorders was **modest, with reduced social functioning most evident**.

Here, 1 year later, we examined if the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with a **differential effect over time** in relation to its psychological and social impact on the same patient cohort.

Methods

- **Semi-structured interviews** with 54 individuals (85.7% response rate) between June 12th and July 29th, 2021, approximately 12 months after their initial interview.
- Subjective experience of the impact of the pandemic on anxiety and mood symptoms, social and vocational functioning measured with the same **Likert scales** at both time-points.
- Anxiety symptoms were also measured utilising subjective (**Beck Anxiety Inventory**) and objective (**Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale**) psychometric instruments.
- **Paired-t-tests or the Wilcoxon-ranked-tests** compared parametric or non-parametric data over-time.
- **Free text data** pertaining to participants' perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 for them were grouped into **themes**.

Results

A modest increase in anxiety symptoms was demonstrated utilising the HARS (1.6 points, $z = 3.017$, $p = 0.003$), with a **very modest increase in depressive symptoms** noted using Likert ratings (0.8 points, $z = 2.119$, $p = 0.034$). **No other significant differences** were noted pertaining to symptomatology or functioning between the two time-points

Five themes were identified with the most prevalent relating to (i) looking forward to post-COVID-19 “normality”, (ii) positive impact of COVID-19 and (iii) positive views regarding vaccination

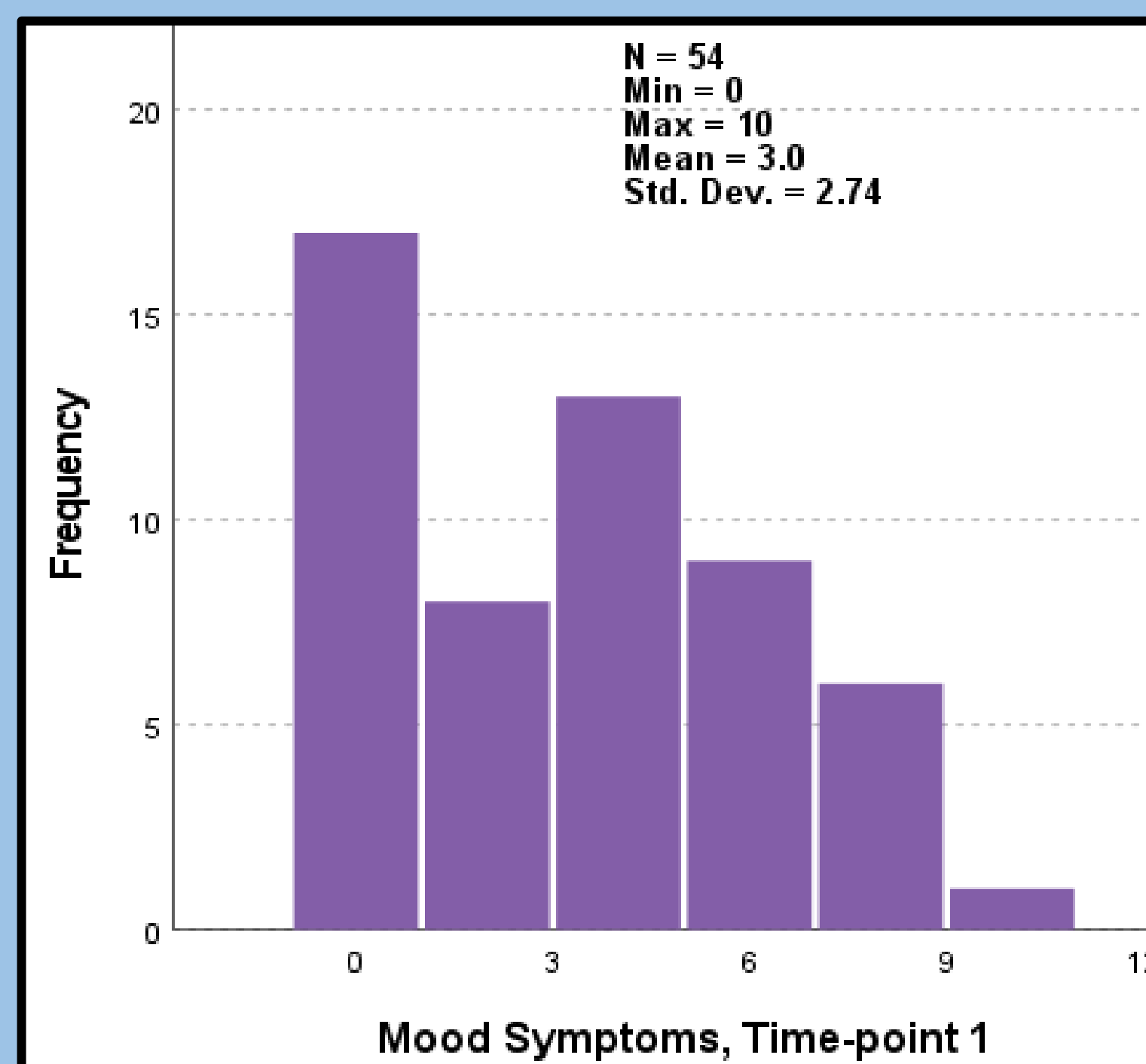


Figure 1. Likert Scale Data, Mood symptoms, June-August 2020

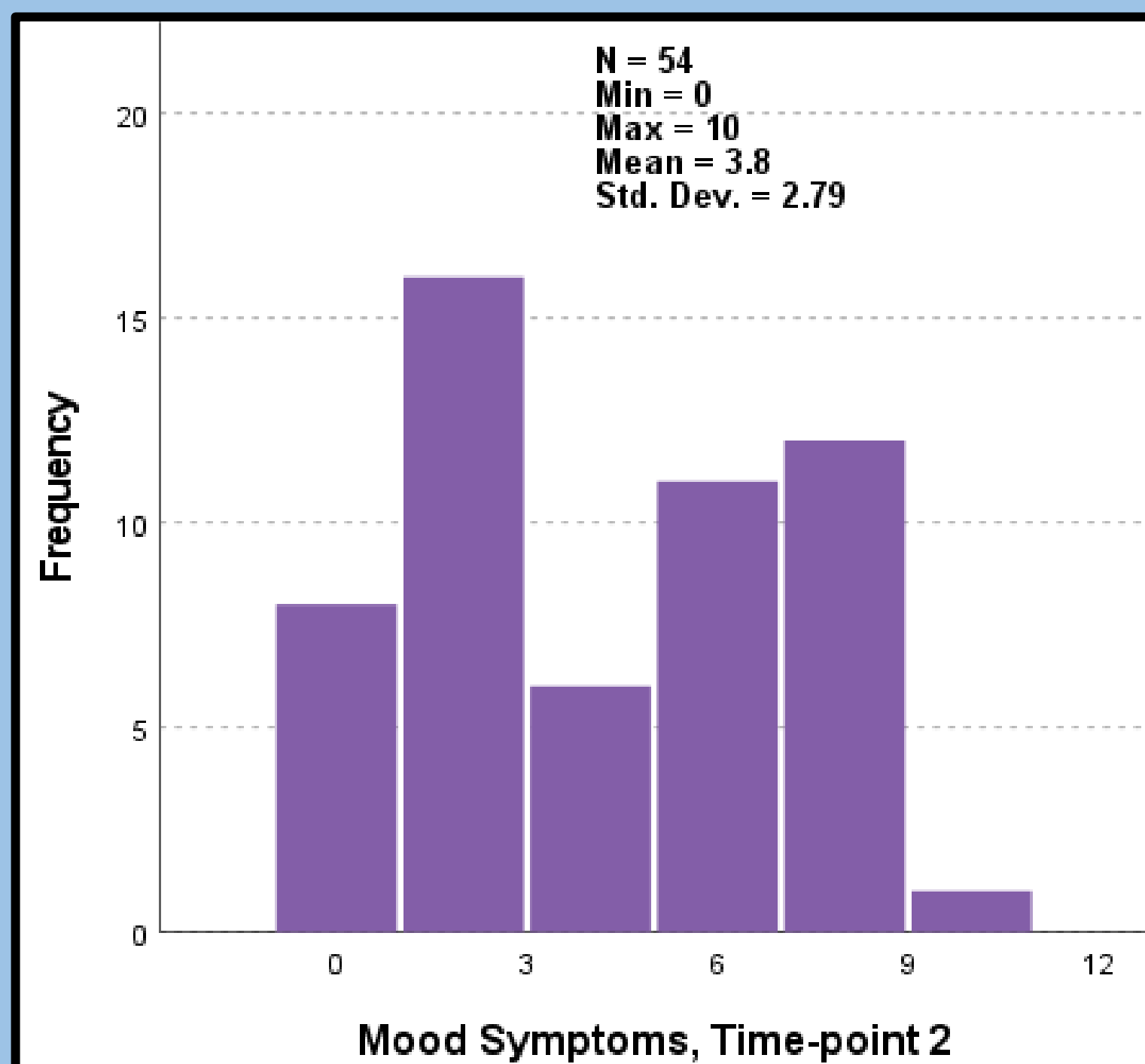


Figure 2. Likert Scale Data, Mood symptoms, June-July 2021

	n	Baseline Mean (SD)	Follow-Up Mean (SD)	Statistics z, p
BAI	48	7 (8.32)	7.9 (6.43)	1.872, 0.061
HAM A	47	6.5 (6.71)	8.1 (5.14)	3.017, 0.003
Likert Scales	54			
Anxiety Levels		3.6 (2.95)	3.6 (2.88)	0.025, 0.980
Mood Symptoms		3 (2.4)	3.8 (2.79)	2.119, 0.034
Social Functioning		3.6 (3.39)	3.9 (2.97)	0.630, 0.529
Occupational Functioning		2.2 (3.35)	2.7 (3.20)	1.209, 0.227
Quality of Life		3 (3.08)	3.1 (2.74)	0.049, 0.961

Table 1. Psychometric Scores - Comparison between baseline and follow-up assessments

Theme 2: Positive Impact of COVID-19 and Lockdowns

- **“Everything being closed made my life less intense, there is less social stress”** (#10, Female)
- **“My anxiety actually decreased because I didn’t have to be around other people as much”** (#21, Male)
- **“I found it to be a nice break”** (#32, Female)
- **“I have had lots of time to practice my musical instrument and am getting better at that”** (#54, Male)

Box 1. Free-text data, Theme 2: Positive Impact of COVID-19 and Lockdowns

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Ethics: Ethical approval was attained from the Galway University Hospitals Research Ethics Committee (C.A. 1462; attained January 7th, 2021)

Conclusion

No significant overall change in symptomatology or functioning over time was noted for individuals with pre-existing treatment resistant psychotic disorders. Overall participants demonstrated **positive views** pertaining both to **vaccination and optimism for the future**.

‘A diagnosis of a mental disorder does not mitigate against an individual’s ability to be resilient’ (Herrman H, et al, 2011)

References

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