



Better Together: Family and Peer Support for Black Young Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Black Lives Matter Movement

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Abstract

The study investigated how the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement impacted Black young adults' social relationships and how receiving support from family or peers differentially influenced psychological adjustment. Surveys were sent in January 2021 and respondents included a total of 346 Black adults (66% female; mean age 26.2). A 2X2 repeated measures analysis of variance with social convoys and events was performed. Separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed with psychological well-being, psychological distress, and psychological need satisfaction. The pandemic negatively impacted relationships with peers. The BLM movement had favorable effects on both peer and family relationships. Family support relating to the pandemic and peer support relating to the BLM movement were associated with heightened psychological adjustment. The beneficial effects of pandemic-related support were mediated by greater psychological need satisfaction. The results indicate how important family and peer support are to individuals' psychological adjustment during pivotal events.

Keywords Psychological need satisfaction · Psychological well-being · Psychological distress · Social relationships · Social support · Black Lives Matter movement · COVID-19 pandemic

The year 2020 brought forth the emergence of the worst public health crisis in a century, which was soon followed by the largest civil rights movement in half a century.

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Black communities were focal points of both crises. Not only did they suffer greater physical and psychological impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic than any other community (Phiri et al., 2021), but they were also deeply affected by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement (Burch et al., 2021). The present study investigates how these two events impacted Black young adults' relationships with family and peers, and how receiving support from both social convoys differentially influenced psychological adjustment, measured as psychological well-being and psychological distress.

As the COVID-19 pandemic developed in North America, it became increasingly evident that Black communities were disproportionately adversely affected (Bassett et al., 2020; Phiri et al., 2021). Indeed, Black communities have been especially touched by the COVID-19 pandemic, with infection rates twice as high and death rates three times as high as the general population (Golestaneh et al., 2020). In addition, governmental restrictions and lockdowns put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic led to widespread social isolation, homelessness, poverty, and precarious employment (Abrams & Szefer, 2020).

As such, many researchers argued that this crisis made it apparent that social inequity is still a constant problem where systems of society continue to oppress underrepresented communities (Gaynor & Wilson, 2020; Wright & Merritt, 2020). Accumulating evidence suggests that systemic racism is directly linked to healthcare inequality and food insecurity, both of which have been thoroughly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Wright & Merritt, 2020). This systemic injustice, in addition to the murders of countless Black individuals at the hands of police officers, gave rise to civil rights movements across the world (Bennett et al., 2020; Hill et al., 2020).

The BLM global network, which is committed to dismantling the systems of oppression that have sustained the trauma and pain of Black and other Racialized communities for generations (Bartholomew et al., 2018), became the face of the movement (Black Lives Matter, 2013; Burch et al., 2021). Previous research shows that engaging in political activism may act as a protective factor for certain young adults (Ballard et al., 2020) and is associated with higher levels of psychological well-being (Dwyer et al., 2019). Additionally, political activism may mitigate stress and isolation during intense periods of transition (Hope et al., 2018). Thus, participating in the movement may have been favorable for young adults' relationships, especially considering the widespread lockdowns and strict enforcement of social isolation resulting from the governmental restrictions put in place to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Social Support from Family and Peers

Social support refers to psychological resources provided by others to help individuals cope with the ups and downs of life (Antonucci et al., 2017). Indeed, individuals go through life embedded in convoys of individuals from whom they receive support (Antonucci et al., 2011). Social support can protect against developing trauma-related psychopathology (Southwick et al., 2005), buffer experiences of stress, and

enhance psychological outcomes such as reduced internalizing symptoms, better health outcomes, and greater self-esteem in Black young adults (Corona et al., 2017).

Taken together, social support is a critical resilience factor at every stage of development (Antonucci et al., 2017). Comparing family and peer support is especially crucial in Black communities given the importance of collectivistic beliefs (Christophe & Stein, 2022). Indeed, familism values (e.g., expectations for familial closeness, support, respect, and obligations) protect and promote Black young adults' psychological well-being (Christophe & Stein, 2022). Across Black communities, the endorsement of familism values has been associated with a multitude of positive outcomes, such as fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety, better self-reported health, and positive family functioning (Chiang et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2021). In addition, familism values are also related to stress-buffering effects in Black individuals, such as lower inflammatory outcomes and broader social support (Chiang et al., 2019; Corona et al., 2017).

In addition, relationships with peers are also a significant part of young adults' lives. In fact, Black individuals who perceived their friends as supportive reported fewer psychological problems (Lagana, 2004; Thomas & Brausch, 2020), and peer support is a main protective factor for Black young adults' mental health (Matlin et al., 2011; Thomas & Brausch, 2020). Thus, these studies suggest that family and peers may both hold important yet different roles in Black young adults' psychological well-being and psychological distress (Thomas & Brausch, 2020).

However, the governmental restrictions put in place to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus may have considerably modified young adults' relationships because it led to widespread lockdowns, sheltering at home, and strict enforcement of social isolation (Abrams & Szeffler, 2020). These measures may have affected peer relationships to a noteworthy extent because most young adults typically interact with their peers in social settings (e.g., at school, in a café, party, bar, or gym). Such activities may be harder to adapt to online environments.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ryan et al., 2021) is an empirically based and widely researched theory of motivation and human behavior. It provides a useful framework for understanding interpersonal relationships, psychological distress, and psychological well-being and seeks to understand how human thriving can be facilitated or diminished by specific social conditions. SDT proposes three basic psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness, and competence) that are vital for individuals' psychological well-being and growth (Ryan et al., 2021). The need for *autonomy* refers to feeling ownership over behaviors and experiences (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). *Relatedness* refers to the need to feel socially connected with others (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Finally, *competence* refers to the need to feel capable of mastering one's environment (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Satisfaction of these basic psychological needs is considered fundamental to the experience of general well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste

et al., 2020), whereas need frustration is associated with stagnation and the development of psychopathologies (Ryan et al., 2016).

SDT researchers have repeatedly shown that the relationships of personal and contextual factors, such as the effects of perceiving support, on positive psychological adjustment outcomes are mediated by higher levels of psychological need satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that support from others enhances all three of the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are considered essential for individuals' mental health (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Support from family and peers may also have a different influence on the satisfaction of individuals' basic psychological needs, which in turn may impact psychological well-being and psychological distress.

Present Study

The present study examined how the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM movement impacted Black young adults' relationships with family and peers and how receiving support from both social convoys differentially influenced psychological well-being and psychological distress. Previous research indicates that individuals rely on family and peers in different ways throughout their life (Antonucci et al., 2019) and that different types of situations or contexts may influence which social convoy will be relied upon (Antonucci et al., 2014).

Thus, based on the literature available, we first hypothesized that the COVID-19 pandemic would negatively impact peer relationships but would have no such effect on family relationships. Second, because BLM activism enhances feelings of social cohesion in Black communities (Hargons et al., 2017), we hypothesized that the BLM movement would have a positive impact on both peer and family relationships. Third, we further hypothesized that perceiving greater peer and family support, both regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM movement, would be associated with higher levels of well-being and lower levels of psychological distress. Finally, following previous SDT literature, we planned on conducting mediational analyses to test whether satisfaction of the basic psychological needs mediated the association between social support and levels of psychological distress and psychological well-being.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

The study was conducted in January 2021 and included 346 participants (64,29% English speaking; 35,71% French speaking) recruited through the survey company Leger. The participants were drawn from Leger's participant panel, which is representative of Canadians in terms of geography, age, gender, socio-economic status, and racial/ethnic make-up. We asked Leger to recruit Black-identifying Canadians

between the ages of 18 and 35 years old. Participants were not recruited based on their involvement in the BLM movement and were compensated by Leger at the usual rate for their participation in this survey. This study was approved by the University Research and Ethics Board.

All measures were taken through the online survey smart software Qualtrics. The survey consisted of 59 questions and was designed to be completed in approximately 25 min.¹

Measures

Demographics

In addition to confirming their ethnicity (i.e., Black/African Canadian), participants reported their age ($M=26.2$, $SD=5.18$), self-reported gender (66% female), and their employment status (43% employed full-time/30 h per week; 32% full-time student; 11% employed part-time; 10% unemployed). The geographical breakdown was as follows: 43% Ontario, 35% Québec, 5% Alberta, 2% British Columbia, 2% Manitoba, 2% Atlantic provinces, 1% Saskatchewan, and 12% did not identify as Canadian citizens. Descriptive analyses showed that 16% of the participants reported living alone, 35% were living with family members, and 49% were living with peers.

Regarding participants' experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic, 10% reported having contracted the COVID-19 virus and 36% reported that someone they knew personally had contracted the COVID-19 virus. Furthermore, 36% of participants reported being an essential worker (e.g., nurses, physicians, psychologists, etc.) and another 35% reported that a family member was an essential worker.

Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Perceived emotional support during the COVID-19 pandemic was assessed with two items (one for family and one for peer support). The item assessing family support was: "To what extent do you feel your family has supported you emotionally during the COVID-19 pandemic?" The item assessing peer support was: "To what extent do you feel your friends have supported you emotionally during the COVID-19 pandemic?" Each item was rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*a great deal*).

Support for Black Lives Matter Movement

Support for involvement in the BLM movement was assessed with two items (one for family and one for peer support). The family support item was: "To what extent do you feel your family has supported you becoming involved in the BLM movement?" The peer support item was: "To what extent do you feel your friends have

¹ Measures are available on OSF: https://osf.io/ayfc5/?view_only=71dd71394ca44c5c8a4aa39430e90d06

supported you becoming involved in the BLM movement?” Each item was rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*a great deal*).

Psychological Distress

Psychological distress was assessed by combining three measures. First, we used the ten-item Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale-Revised (CESD-R 10; Andresen et al., 1994), which is a validated self-report measure of depression symptoms that focuses on the affectivity component of depressed mood. The scale includes ten items such as “I could not get going” and “I was bothered by things that usually don’t bother me” using a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*rarely or none of the time*; <1 day) to 4 (*most or all the time*; 5–7 days). A depressive symptom score was computed by totaling the ten items. Second, to measure anxiety levels, we used the seven-item Anxiety Measure (GAD-7; Spitzer et al., 2006), a validated self-report measure of anxiety. The scale includes items such as “Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge” and “Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen” which are measured using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*nearly every day*). An anxiety symptoms score was computed by totaling the seven items. The scale showed adequate reliability, $\alpha=0.83$. Lastly, the nine-item scale of affect (Emmons, 1992) was used, but only the five negative items (“unhappy”, “worried/anxious”, “frustrated”, “depressed”, “angry/hostile”) were used to compute a negative affect score. All items were rated using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). The scale showed a reliability of $\alpha=0.82$. Taken together, the psychological distress scales had a mean $r=0.65$.

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being was measured in terms of life satisfaction and positive affect. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) is a five-item scale that assesses “global life satisfaction—an evaluative judgment of one’s life as a whole” (Diener et al., 1985, p. 91). Participants rated items such as “the conditions of my life are excellent” on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The reliability of this scale was $\alpha=0.87$. Participants also rated their affect using a nine-item scale of affect (Emmons, 1992), of which only the four positive items (“joyful”, “enjoyment/fun”, “pleased”, “happy”) were used to compute a positive affect score. All items were rated using a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). The reliability of this scale was $\alpha=0.81$. Taken together, the psychological well-being scales had a mean $r=0.48$.

Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction

The Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs scale (BMPN; Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012) was used to assess psychological need satisfaction. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 7 (*very true*). Need satisfaction was assessed with nine items (three statements for each need). For example, the item “I was free to do things my

own way” was used to assess autonomy need satisfaction, the item “I felt a sense of contact with people who care for me, and whom I care for” was used to assess relatedness need satisfaction, and the item “I was successfully completing difficult tasks and projects” was used to assess competence need satisfaction. The mean of the nine need satisfaction items was calculated for each participant. The nine-item scale was reliable, $\alpha=0.86$.

Analytical Strategy

All analyses were conducted with SPSS statistics software (Version 27). First, paired sample *t*-tests were conducted to examine the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic and BLM movement impacted peer and family relationships (a seven-point scale ranging from -3 to +3 was used, with 0 representing no effect). Second, a 2X2 repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with social convoys (family/peers) and contexts (COVID-19 pandemic/BLM movement) was performed to examine variation in social support. Next, three separate hierarchical regression analyses with psychological well-being, psychological distress, and psychological need satisfaction were conducted. To achieve this, two composite indexes were created. A composite of psychological well-being was created by standardizing and combining the measures of life satisfaction and positive affect, whereas a composite of psychological distress was created by standardizing and combining scores of negative affect, depressive symptoms, and anxiety symptoms. Age, gender, and living conditions were included in the preliminary analyses. Specifically, contrast codes were used to compare (1) the impact of living with family as opposed to with peers or alone and (2) the impact of living with peers as opposed to living with family or alone on the outcome variables.

Finally, since support from family and/or peers resulted in being statistically significantly related to psychological well-being and/or psychological distress, we examined the influence of psychological need satisfaction. Thus, mediation analyses were performed to test whether psychological need satisfaction mediated the relation between support (family/peers) and psychological adjustment (psychological well-being/psychological distress) on the associations that proved to be significant. We used the method outlined by Hayes (2012) to test mediation models by estimating 95% confidence intervals (CI) of the indirect effect using bootstrap resampling ($k=10,000$) procedures.

Results

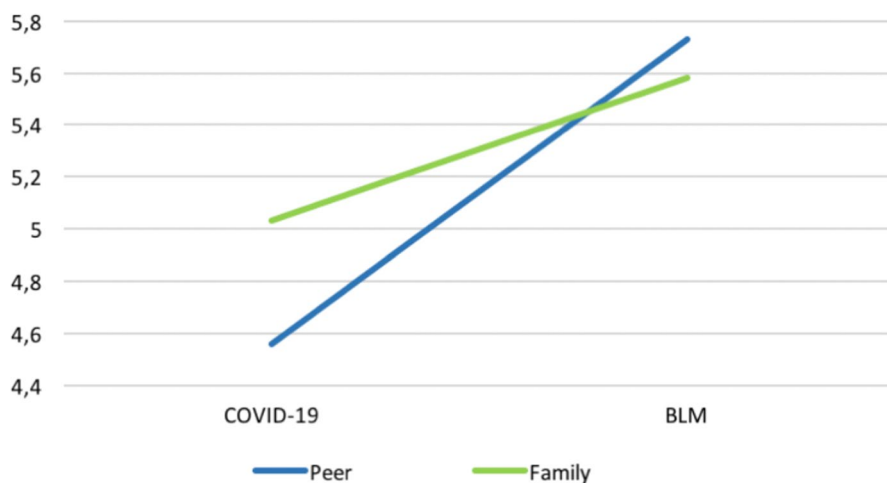
Impacts of Contexts on Social Relationships

Table 1 provides the means for the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic and BLM movement impacted peer and family relationships. Recall that the seven-point scale ran from -3 to +3, with 0 representing no effect. One sample *t*-tests showed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a statistically significant negative impact on peer

Table 1 Sample size, means, and standard deviations for the impact of COVID-19 and BLM movement on relationships

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Relational impact of the COVID-19 pandemic			
1. Family	339	0.06	1.45
2. Peer	341	−0.84	1.45
Relational impact of the BLM movement			
1. Family	338	0.29	1.01
2. Peer	336	0.26	0.91

Note. From $n = 346$

**Fig. 1** Effects of social support on psychological well-being and psychological distress

relationships, $t(340) = -10.87$, $\eta^2 = 0.055$, $p < 0.001$, but no effect on family relationships, $t(340) = 0.72$, $\eta^2 = 0.008$, $p = 0.477$.

The results of the one-sample t -tests for the impact of the BLM movement provide a very different portrait. The BLM movement had a statistically significant positive impact on peer relationships, $t(340) = 4.66$, $\eta^2 = 0.038$, $p < 0.001$, and on family relationships, $t(340) = 5.82$, $\eta^2 = 0.044$, $p < 0.001$. The effects across the two types of relationships did not differ from one another.

Comparison of Social Support and Contexts

A 2 X 2 repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) with social convoys (family/peers) and contexts (COVID-19 pandemic/BLM movement) was performed to examine variation in social support. The ANOVA yielded statistically significant main effects for social convoys, $F(1,338) = 5.54$, $p = 0.02$, $\eta^2 = 0.016$, and contexts, $F(1,338) = 47.26$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.123$. A statistically significant interaction effect was also found, $F(1,338) = 20.89$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.058$.

Figure 1 shows the means for the level of support received from family and peers separately for the two contexts. Family gave relatively greater support than peers in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas peers gave relatively greater support than family for the BLM movement. It is important to note that support from both family and peers was much higher when it related to the BLM movement.

A composite index of psychological well-being was created by standardizing and combining the measures of life satisfaction and positive affect, $r=0.48$, $p<0.001$. A composite of psychological distress was created by standardizing and combining scores on negative affect, depressive symptoms, and anxiety symptoms, $r=0.65$, $p<0.0001$. The psychological well-being and distress composites were statistically significantly negatively correlated, $r=-0.19$, $p<0.0001$, but only moderately, suggesting value in keeping the two separated.

Support was measured from peers and family in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM movement of 2020. Age was included in these analyses, but gender was not because preliminary analyses showed no effects for the gender of participants. Living condition was included in the analyses because whether one lives alone, with peers, or with family may confer benefits of emotional and tangible support. Specifically, contrast codes were used to compare (1) the impact of living with family as opposed to with peers or alone and (2) the impact of living with peers as opposed to living with family or alone on the outcome variables.

Three separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed with psychological well-being, psychological distress, and psychological need satisfaction as the dependent variables. Age was entered first, the contrast codes for living conditions (peers/family) were entered second, support from peers and family for the COVID-19 pandemic was entered third, and support from peers and family for the BLM movement was entered fourth. The regression for psychological well-being yielded a highly statistically significant multiple R of 0.471, $F(7, 293)=11.961$, $p<0.001$. Table 2 shows the results for the individual predictors. Living with one's family was associated with statistically significant higher psychological well-being. Support from both peers and family during the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with statistically significant higher psychological well-being. The impact of family support during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, was statistically significantly greater than from peers, $z=2.30$, $p=0.01$, $\eta^2=0.014$. Support in relation to the BLM movement was statistically unrelated to well-being outcomes.

The regression of psychological distress yielded a statistically significant multiple R of 0.291, $F(7,293)=2.826$, $p<0.001$. Table 3 shows the results for the individual predictors. Living with family was associated with statistically significant lower psychological distress. Family support regarding the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with statistically significant lower psychological distress. Peer support in relation to the BLM movement was also statistically significant related to lower psychological distress. Peer support regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and family support regarding the BLM movement were statistically unrelated to psychological distress. Age was also statistically significantly negatively related to psychological distress, suggesting that younger participants may experience greater psychological distress.

Table 2 Hierarchical linear regression analyses depicting psychological well-being by individual predictors

Variables	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	<i>R</i> ² Δ	<i>F</i> test Δ
Step 1					0.003	1.041
Age	0.010	1.020	0.309	[−0.009, 0.029]		
Step 2					0.063	9.995**
Peer living arrangement	0.092	0.614	0.540	[−0.203, 0.386]		
Family living arrangement	0.572	3.827	<0.001	[0.278, 0.867]		
Step 3					0.149	27.957**
Peer support during the COVID-19 pandemic	0.108	2.055	0.041	[0.005, 0.211]		
Family support during the COVID-19 pandemic	0.282	5.346	<0.001	[0.178, 0.386]		
Step 4					0.007	1.351
Peer support during the BLM movement	0.090	1.445	0.149	[−0.033, 0.213]		
Family support during the BLM movement	−0.096	−1.546	0.123	[−0.218, 0.026]		

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$

Table 3 Hierarchical linear regression analyses depicting psychological distress by individual predictors

Variables	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	<i>R</i> ² Δ	<i>F</i> test Δ
Step 1					0.013	4.018*
Age	−0.020	−2.004	0.045	[−0.039, −0.001]		
Step 2					0.025	3.795*
Peer living arrangement	−0.122	−0.802	0.423	[−0.421, 0.177]		
Family living arrangement	−0.388	−2.553	0.011	[−0.687, −0.089]		
Step 3					0.034	5.349*
Peer support during the COVID-19 pandemic	−0.003	−0.055	0.956	[−0.116, 0.109]		
Family support during the COVID-19 pandemic	−0.164	−2.850	0.005	[−0.277, −0.051]		
Step 4					0.013	2.130
Peer support during the BLM movement	−0.139	−2.060	0.040	[−0.272, −0.006]		
Family support during the BLM movement	0.099	1.465	0.144	[−0.034, 0.231]		

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$

The regression of need satisfaction yielded a highly statistically significant multiple R of 0.485, $F(7, 293) = 10.327$, $p < 0.001$. Table 4 shows the results for the individual predictors. Age was associated with greater psychological need satisfaction. Living with one's family was associated with marginally higher psychological need satisfaction. Family support regarding the COVID-19 pandemic,

Table 4 Hierarchical linear regression analyses depicting psychological need satisfaction by individual predictors

Variables	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	<i>R</i> ² Δ	<i>F</i> test Δ
Step 1					0.014	4.130*
Age	0.023	2.032	0.043	[0.001, 0.045]		
Step 2					0.030	4.737*
Peer living arrangement	-0.124	-0.713	0.476	[-0.466, 0.218]		
Family living arrangement	0.326	1.878	0.061	[-0.016, 0.668]		
Step 3					0.183	35.040**
Peer support during the COVID-19 pandemic	0.071	1.194	0.233	[-0.046, 0.189]		
Family support during the COVID-19 pandemic	0.404	6.720	<0.001	[0.286, 0.522]		
Step 4					0.007	1.241
Peer support during the BLM movement	0.119	1.677	0.095	[-0.021, 0.259]		
Family support during the BLM movement	-0.068	-0.955	0.340	[-0.207, 0.072]		

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$

but not peer support regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, was associated with statistically significant higher need satisfaction. Peer support in relation to the BLM movement was statistically marginally related to higher psychological need satisfaction, whereas family support for the BLM movement was statistically unrelated.

Mediation Results

The coefficients presented above point toward the possibility that psychological need satisfaction mediated the relation between the support variables and psychological adjustment. Specifically, we tested whether psychological need satisfaction mediated the association between (1) family support during the COVID-19 pandemic and psychological adjustment (both psychological well-being and psychological distress), (2) peer support during the COVID-19 pandemic and psychological well-being, and (3) peer support during the BLM movement and psychological distress.

Results from the first mediation analyses showed that family support during the COVID-19 pandemic was positively associated with need satisfaction, $b = 0.43$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 8.72$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.33, 0.52]. Need satisfaction was positively related to psychological well-being, $b = 0.51$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 10.53$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.41, 0.60]. Next, we examined the total, indirect, and direct effects. The total effect of family support on psychological well-being was statistically significant, $b = 0.39$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 7.81$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.29, 0.49].

The indirect effect of family support on well-being through need satisfaction was estimated to be $b=0.22$, $SE=0.03$, 95% CI [0.15, 0.29]. This is considered significant because the confidence intervals do not straddle zero (Hayes, 2012). The direct effects of family support were also statistically significant, $b=0.17$, $SE=0.05$, $t=3.61$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI [0.08, 0.27].

Next, we sought to examine whether need satisfaction mediated the association between perceiving emotional support from family during the COVID-19 pandemic and psychological distress. We performed a second mediation analysis. Results from the mediation analyses showed that family support during the COVID-19 pandemic was positively associated with need satisfaction, $b=0.43$, $SE=0.05$, $t=8.72$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI [0.33, 0.52]. Need satisfaction was positively related to psychological distress, $b=-0.23$, $SE=0.06$, $t=-3.93$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI [-0.34, -0.11]. Next, we examined the total, indirect, and direct effects. The total effect of family support on psychological distress was statistically significant at $b=-0.16$, $SE=0.05$, $t=-2.95$, $p<0.01$, 95% CI [-0.26, -0.05]. The indirect effect of family support on psychological distress through need satisfaction was estimated to be $b=-0.10$, $SE=0.03$, 95% CI [-0.16, -0.05]. The direct effects of family support were no longer statistically significant, $b=-0.06$, $SE=0.06$, $t=-1.04$, $p=0.300$, 95% CI [-0.17, 0.05], suggesting full mediation.

We also examined the relation between support from peers during the COVID-19 pandemic and psychological well-being. Results from the mediation analyses showed that peer support was positively associated with need satisfaction, $b=0.25$, $SE=0.05$, $t=4.76$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI [0.14, 0.35]. Need satisfaction was positively related to changes in [psychological well-being](#), $b=0.54$, $SE=0.05$, $t=11.97$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI [0.45, 0.63]. The total effect of peer support on psychological distress was statistically significant at $b=0.29$, $SE=0.05$, $t=5.58$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI [0.19, 0.39]. The indirect effect of peer support on psychological distress through need satisfaction was estimated to be $b=0.14$, $SE=0.03$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.21]. The direct effects of peer support were $b=0.16$, $SE=0.05$, $t=3.44$, $p<0.001$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.24], suggesting partial mediation.

Lastly, we examined the association between support from peers for the BLM movement and changes in [psychological distress](#). Results from the mediation analyses showed that peer support was statistically unrelated with changes in need satisfaction, $b=0.09$, $SE=0.05$, $t=1.75$, $p=0.08$, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.20].

Discussion

The current research investigated how the two events of 2020 impacted Black young adults' relationships with peers and family and how receiving social support influenced levels of psychological well-being and psychological distress.

Impacts of Contexts on Social Relationships

The first question we examined was the differential impacts the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM movement had on young adults' relationships with peers and family. Our results showed that the COVID-19 pandemic appeared to have a negative impact on peer but not on family relationships. These findings are not surprising, since the endorsement of familial closeness, support, respect, and obligations seems to be of great significance for Black young adults (Chiang et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2021). Nevertheless, it is important to mention that perhaps our sample came from high-functioning families. Also, the governmental restrictions put in place to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus led to widespread lockdowns, sheltering at home, and strict enforcement of social isolation (Abrams & Szeffler, 2020), which may have affected to a greater extent peer relationships.

By contrast, our results suggest that the BLM movement positively impacted both peer and family relationships. This may be because the BLM movement elicited a desire to join the movement to show solidarity in protesting systemic discrimination, racism, and police brutality against Black and Racialized communities. Indeed, evidence suggests that political activism may be an effective coping strategy to mitigate psychological distress and isolation during intense periods of transition (Hope et al., 2018) and that political activism and striving for the welfare of others is associated with more psychological well-being (Dwyer et al., 2019). Thus, our results are in line with prior research and may suggest that participating in the movement led to greater feelings of unity. Engaging in the BLM movement may have contributed to a feeling of resilience and empowerment (Godsay & Brodsky, 2018).

Comparison of Social Support and Contexts on Psychological Adjustment

Our results also suggest that perceiving support from family and peers was differentially helpful during the two events. Both family and peer support concerning the COVID-19 pandemic were associated with higher levels of psychological well-being, but the effects for family were significantly stronger than for peers. In terms of psychological distress, family support regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and peer support regarding the BLM movement were significantly associated with lower levels of psychological distress. Thus, in terms of mitigating the harmful consequences of stressful events, there seemed to be an association between (1) family support and the COVID-19 pandemic and (2) peer support and the BLM movement.

Interestingly, family members appeared to give relatively greater support than peers in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas peers gave relatively greater support than family members for the BLM movement. Nevertheless, it is important to note that support from both family and peers was much higher when it related to the BLM movement. Social support during that time may have been extremely adaptive, especially since researchers have shown that psychological

wounds resulting from historical traumatic experiences (colonization, slavery, genocide, dislocation, and other related trauma) are as destructive as bodily injuries (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019).

Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction

The present research also identified a motivational mediator that accounted for the beneficial effects of family and peers support concerning the COVID-19 pandemic—the extent to which Black young adults had their three basic psychological needs satisfied. These findings are not surprising since previous research in SDT has shown that social support enhances individuals' basic psychological needs, which are considered essential for a healthy psychological adjustment (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020).

Interestingly, the beneficial effects of peer support during the BLM movement were not mediated by psychological need satisfaction. These results may be because we enquired upon individual, rather than *collective* psychological needs. Recent research suggests that individuals respond to both their own needs and those of their group (Kachanoff et al., 2019) and that collective (rather than individual) need satisfaction predicted positive levels of functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM movement in Black young adults (Koestner & Holding, 2021). Thus, given that a focus on the collective is prominent in Black psychology, it may be that the beneficial outcomes from peer support during the BLM movement were mediated by the satisfaction of collective, rather than individual, psychological needs. Indeed, collective identity, which describes ones' sense of connection to a group, positively influences Black individuals' adjustment (Johnson & Carter, 2020).

Limitations

Several limitations are to be considered with the current research. First, the study only used cross-sectional data. It is thus possible that the correlations in the present study were due to confounding variables and do not allow for causal conclusions. Second, other factors such as distinct opportunities and constraints, differences in family and peer structures, or economic considerations may have influenced the results. Third, the data collected was based on self-reports, and this research would be strengthened by adding family and peer reports. Finally, this study was conducted with a sample consisting of Black young adults. While this might be a strength of the current study, future research should utilize more heterogeneous samples to discover whether the results can generalize across populations. This would allow for the exploration of whether the experience of Black young adults to the events of 2020 was shared by other Racialized communities. Indeed, the circumstances may have fostered intraminority solidarity, which refers to feelings of closeness and shared interests among marginalized groups and the barriers that they are facing (Burson & Godfrey, 2020).

Future Directions

This research contributes to the growing literature concerning the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM movement on Racialized populations. Since activism comes with its own psychological implications, future research should investigate the role of critical consciousness, which is defined as the understanding that social inequalities exist, are unjustifiable, and should be confronted (Conlin et al., 2021). Next, future research might compare similar studies across the United States. This could allow for a broader picture of how activism and the COVID-19 pandemic impacted psychological adjustment in North American Black communities. It could also provide a clearer view of the ways support from family and peers was related to psychological adjustment. With this in mind, it would be critical to investigate how social support relates to positive racial socialization (Barr & Neville, 2014) and effective racism-related coping (Forsyth & Carter, 2014). Finally, previous research suggests that social support may reduce psychological distress by altering perceptions of the threatening situation (Morese, et al., 2019). Thus, future research could make finer distinctions in trying to understand the differences between family and peer support and the contexts in which it is given. We hope this study encourages more research to be conducted which can speak to how the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM movement have uniquely impacted Racialized communities.

Conclusion

The current research investigated how the two pivotal events of 2020 impacted Black young adults' relationships and how perceiving social support from family and peers differently influenced psychological well-being and psychological distress. Results suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic may have negatively impacted peers but not family relationships. By contrast, the BLM movement was perceived as having positively impacted both peer and family relationships. Furthermore, family support during the COVID-19 pandemic and peer support during the BLM movement were associated with lower psychological distress. Finally, the beneficial effects of pandemic-related support on psychological adjustment were mediated by greater psychological need satisfaction.

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Data Availability The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to the fact that they constitute an excerpt of research in progress but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethics Approval The study was conducted in compliance with APA ethical standards and was approved by the University Research and Ethics Board. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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