

To be thoroughly honest, I spent the last days genuinely trying to write about how the pandemic affected my life. I eagerly wanted to highlight the importance of properly including mental health care in the support services from the perspective of someone who struggled with crippling anxiety throughout the whole pandemic. In fact, I now know I am not alone, as mental health issues increased by 25% according to the World Health Organization.

This issues us even more to think about the considerable importance of such an event. I mean, we undoubtedly know by now that a global pandemic is no fun, especially after two years. Therefore, I am not surprised that, when having a more attentive look, researchers<sup>1</sup> observed patterns of "cultural trauma". I don't know about you, but I don't have many memories about COVID lockdown. I just remember the ongoing switch from big screen to small screen in order to occupy my empty days, and one of my guilty pleasures was to binge on memes.

For further information, a meme is succinctly defined by the dictionary as "*an amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video) or genre of items spread widely online especially through social media.*"

I'd say it's more that just an amusing item and recently academia has realized that "Nothing defines our use of the internet as clearly as the meme"<sup>2</sup>. Memes are a huge part of internet culture and an active part of the social discourse that conveys said culture<sup>3</sup>. Plus, they are sincerely hilarious, that's what we enjoy about them.

In fact, humor is ultimately rooted in our human condition. Anthropologists, philosophers, psychologists and even Darwin talked about how important laughing is for us, individually and collectively.<sup>4</sup> Humor helps us build connections, develop strength as a community and cope with prolonged stress<sup>5</sup>. On top of that, internet content has inevitably become a rich data source as it documents narratives and illustrates culture through relatedness to symbols<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the research of Demertzis and Eyerman (2020)

<sup>2</sup> Quote of Rintel (2014) cited by Iloh (2021)

<sup>3</sup> According to Iloh (2021)

<sup>4</sup> Broyles (2016)

<sup>5</sup> Broyles (2016)

<sup>6</sup> Iloh (2021)

For the sake of the anecdote, I want to share this meme with you.



I got sent this meme by my sister at the very beginning of lockdown, when we started realizing that it would be way longer than the promised 15 days. Finding it again last christmas made me realize the magnitude of the events and reminded me of how intense those last two years had been.

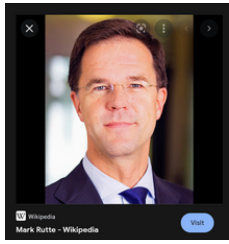
I don't remember every single meme I received. Mostly because my mom and my sister shared a lot of them. But I know for sure they not only helped me feel less alone in my distress but also allowed me to deal with a more lighthearted version of the pandemic, as a placebo, so would say Cancelas- Ouviaña (2021).

All in all, according to these authors, we kept ourselves updated on the new measures to stop the spread but also on the mistakes and careless actions from our policy makers and public speakers: underestimating the spread of covid or wicked strategies to remove lockdown.

The following section displays a careful selection<sup>7</sup> of memes of familiar faces and names during the pandemic, from all five CHARM-EU countries.

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<sup>7</sup> This further added section has been possible through the contribution of CHARM-EU students that shared, translated and explained memes they enjoyed during the pandemic.



Cabinet Rutte VIII  
(on intelligent lockdown)

"Dear people, you are all  
allowed outside again"

And we're still not really sure when this lockdown is going to end via [DutchReview](#) (8th April, 2020)

Van a caer tres o cuatro gotas

"It's only gonna be a couple drops"



Director of the Spanish  
Coordinating Centre for  
Health Alerts and Emergencies  
at the Ministry of Health

La predicción meteorológica de Fernando Simón via [Fútbol Addict](#) (7th November, 2020)



"If you are already tired of him,  
try thinking about something else"

**Pal** Gyorfi, spokesman for the  
hungarian National Ambulance Service

For example **NEPAL**

Györfi Pál imádja a róla készült mémeket via [infostart.hu](#) (26th April, 2020)



Irish head deputy and medical doctor



Boris Johnson

British Prime Minister

Leo Varadkar inspired meme via [irishmirror.ie](http://irishmirror.ie) (3rd April 2020)



Apéro Bingo Macron 20h via [Reddit](https://www.reddit.com) (31st March, 2021)

me: yeah i guess i could handle 3 weeks of quarantine government:



COVID-19 Pandemic via [Knowyourmeme.com](https://www.knowyourmeme.com) (30th March, 2020)

Also, we laughed about the toilet paper crisis and about how much we ate out of boredom.



Currency meme via [memes.com](https://memes.com) (2020)



When you ask someone if their diet is going well while in isolation via [Dank Memes](https://dankmemes.com) (n.d)

We got creative with the unexpected situation of mobility restriction and about how long it lasted.

When someone in the house returns from the grocery shop



Quarantined memes- Tales from the grocery store via [Know your meme](#) (29th April, 2020)



Saving the world in 1944 vs. 2020 meme via [memezila](#) (n.d.)

Mostly everyone: inside  
isolating themselves from  
the rest of society

Dogs around the world:



At least we can feel better about spending more time with our dogs! [Daily star.co.uk](#) (n.d.)

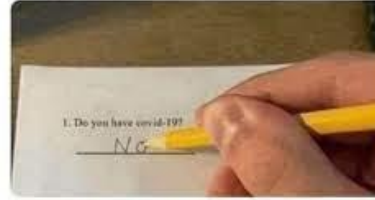


Enjoying quarantine via [9gag](#) (29 april, 2020)

We got upset and confused about masks, sanitiser and tests.

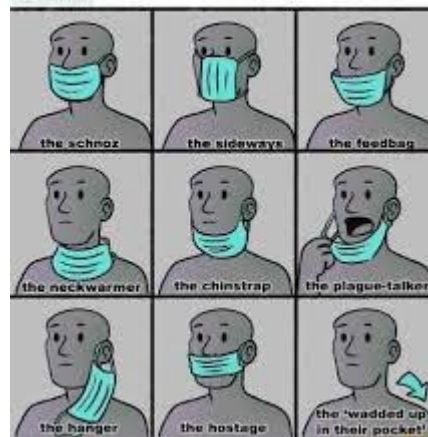
Construction Sites: "We're testing all workers for COVID"

The test:



Construction sites We are testing all workers for covid-19 Meanwhile the test meme via [Memezilla](#) (n.d.)

### Ineffective Face Mask Bingo



Ineffective Face Mask Bingo · A Journal of the Plague Year via [Covid-19 Archive](#). (2019).

Laughing at a meme before:



Laughing at a meme now:



The struggle is real via [Reddit](#) (21st April 2020)

We werer even more upset about video calls.

Me and the boys ready for Zoom



Me and my boys ready for Zoom meme via [twitter](#) (22nd April 2020)

We didn't miss the opportunity to joke about traditions and we even laughed about death, to make it more bearable through the process of cognitive reappraisal <sup>8</sup>.

When you are halfway through christmas dinner and they announce a new lockdown tier



When you are halfway through christmas dinner and they announce new lockdown tier meme Via [MemeZilla](#) (n.d)



Coffin-dancers meme via [Sapnepublication](#) (5th April 2020)

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<sup>8</sup> Term used by Akram et al. (2021) meaning that we actively alter the way we think about triggering events.



This funny overview of the key moments of a pandemic tells us a valuable message on how the sense of community, even online, is crucial to cope with traumatic successes. Humor has been a means to document the lived experiences as a tool to develop resilience and tolerance to uncertainty, making our lives easier.

When it comes to me, memes gave me discussion topics with my parents, a way to stay connected to my friends when nothing interesting was going on in my life. It did not cure my mental issues, but at least I had a few laughs.

Alèxia Torner Crespo.