

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Huma Asim,¹ Hassan Bukhari,² Asim Shaukat,² Amna Rehan,² Abdur Rauf,² Zafar Ch³

¹ Department of Psychology, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus, Islamabad, Pakistan.

² Department of Radiology, Allied Hospital, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

³ Faisalabad Medical University, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

PJR October - December 2020; 30(4): 282-285

ABSTRACT

A raging pandemic prompted the world to take extreme measures in the form of lockdowns, travel bans and ending day to day economic and social activity. This in turn led to the rise of severe psychological distress among the population. We searched the literature to determine the rise in anxiety and depression and to determine its various causes. A cumulative score of anxiety during the pandemic was calculated as 26.91% while for depression it was calculated as 18.19%. A drop in economy, isolation from family, family members affected by the disease were some of the most frequently observed culprits although further categorical research is needed for this.

Introduction

The idea of a global pandemic in the modern era had vastly been considered a fan fictional idea. One that had its place in utopian movies rather than real life. For the past several decades the authorities had vastly been focused on other areas of economy and sciences, without giving this possibility a due consideration.

Alas, a new decade, brought a new pandemic alongside it and it brought the whole world at a halt due to its deadly nature. But as the data started coming in the death rate, the infectivity rate and the R0 number of the virus were discovered and the authorities were informed by the scientific community. They asked the authorities to take the only safe route that they could take now and that was mass shut-downs and lockdowns, to control the virus. But as the lockdowns hit, people were forced into their homes. They had to either work from home with pay cuts or they were laid off altogether. This brought in the people a fear of the future and laid the grounds for depression in the minds of the people. Now as the pandemic is starting to settle there is still a mass dilemma in the minds of the masses regarding their safety at the workplace, the safety of their children

at schools, and the impact that this would leave on their lives.

Method

The basic idea of this systematic review is to figure out the degree of psychological impact of the virus in terms of rise in anxiety and depression reported during and up to 3 months after the virus settled-down (cutoff end-date 1st of July). This review was approved by ERC of Institute.

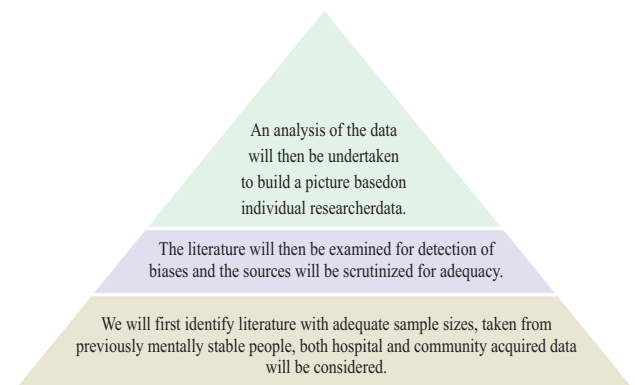


Figure 1: Literature review collection and analysis methodology

Correspondence : Huma Asim
Department of Psychology,
Riphah International University,
Faisalabad Campus, Islamabad, Pakistan.
Email: drasimshaukat2011@gmail.com

Submitted 19 October 2020, Accepted 23 October 2020

Results

A cumulative score of anxiety was calculated as 26.91%.^{3,6,7,8,9,10,11-15}

A cumulative score of depression was calculated as 18.19%.^{3,6,8,9,10,11-15} A very high PTSD percentage was only observed in two researches (31.8%¹³ and 10.8%)¹⁴ while in others it was not reported. Stress level was reported as 6.6%,³ 8.1%,⁶ 1.5%.¹⁴

Discussion

It was observed that the masses responded to the pandemic in a hysteric manner. The sudden knowledge of a rampant viral disease that had no cure, no vaccine, and no treatment other than supportive rang an alarm bell in the heads of the masses of a sudden arrival of a doomsday. This also followed mass lockdowns as were observed in many countries like China, Italy, Spain, India, United States etc. worked to hypersensitive the public's fear. The broadcast media although played a role in sensitizing the public to prevention technique but it also simultaneously kept on raising the fear threshold in the masses due to its display of graphic content¹⁶ and worldwide broadcasted numbers of cases and deaths.¹⁷

We observed that Social media played a key role in the rampant spread of fake news unapproved unauthentic treatments, and mass propagandas related to the virus.¹⁸ It also became evident that social media also played a key role in promoting negative psychological emotions such as anxiety, depression and indignation. The social media campaigns also worked to raise the sensitivity to social risks. Simultaneously the scores of positive emotions such as happiness and life satisfaction were observed to have decreased. People became more concerned about their health and family, while leisure activities and friendships took a back seat.¹

Among the reviewed literature it was discovered that psychological distress when measured was extremely high and almost one third of the respondents were experiencing such a phenomenon. Psychological distress is a broad category and the studied literature did not categorize it. But higher levels of psychological distress in itself will lead to a halt to the economy

which then in itself will lead to further mental issues in the populations.¹⁹

Anxiety and depression are usually used as the key markers for mental health. So we focused on literature that specifically calculated the levels of anxiety and depression among the masses.

Researchers mostly used the 7-item Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) to measure anxiety levels. A cumulative score of anxiety was calculated as 26.91% from researches that didn't categorize anxiety into subtypes. Cao W et al. attempted to describe the level of anxiety they observed into mild, moderate and severe and they described it as 21.3%, 2.75 and 0.9% respectively.² Similarly Chang J et al. observed mild, moderate and severe levels of anxiety as 23.19%, 2.71%, and 0.7% respectively.¹² But this data of categorization was obtained only from Chinese population. So it may vary globally.

For depression various scales were used depending on researcher and country preference. A cumulative score of depression was calculated as 18.19% among the entire population.

This is a relatively high number when we compare it with the usual cases of depression reported across the world.

The rise in psychological distress was very predictable in this scenario as the modern society had never experienced a pandemic in the past 100 years. Psychological distress was either due to the mass lockdowns, the drop in economy and business or due to having family members affected by the disease itself. People whose family members were directly affected by the disease had a higher degree of psychological distress as compared to those who had no such history. Similarly people in big cities were observed to be more distressed than individuals living in small towns. Also individuals who lived alone in apartments or in college dorms were seen to affected at a higher level.

The development of such high levels of anxiety and depression in the masses was an alarming insight. Although stratification of masses into group to discover the actual root causes of the mental issues was not observed in literature, the literature research gives us a threshold on which we can build upon. We recommend further research on clinically detected cases in the upcoming 6 months. The cases should be categorized into Covid related and others. Covid

related cases should be further studied to determine in detail whether it was the economic crash, the lack of social contact, the government's mandatory lockdowns/travel restrictions or were there other reasons for their mental health issues in the previous months.


Conclusion

A high level of psychological distress due to a lethal viral pandemic led to a considerable rise in the levels of both anxiety and depression among the masses. A drop in economy and the markets, isolation from family, family members affected by the disease were some of the most frequently observed culprits although further categorical research is needed for this.

Conflict of Interest: None

References

1. Li S WYXJZNZT. The Impact of COVID-19 Epidemic Declaration on Psychological Consequences: A Study on Active Weibo Users. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2020; **17(6)**: 2032.
2. Cao W FZHGea. The psychological impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on college students in China. *Psychiatry Res*. 2020; **287**: 112934.
3. Tan BYQ CNLGea. Psychological Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Health Care Workers in Singapore. *Ann Intern Med*. 2020; **173(4)**: 317-20.
4. Moccia L JDPMea. Affective temperament, attachment style, and the psychological impact of the COVID-19 outbreak: an early report on the Italian general population. *Brain Behav Immun*. 2020; **87**: 75-9.
5. Varshney M PJRNSS. Initial psychological impact of COVID-19 and its correlates in Indian Community: An online (FEEL-COVID) survey. *PLoS One*. 2020; **15(5)**: e0233874.
6. Wang C PRWXea. A longitudinal study on the mental health of general population during the COVID-19 epidemic in China. *Brain Behav Immun*. 2020; **87**: 40-8.
7. Fitzpatrick KM HCDG. Fear of COVID-19 and the mental health consequences in America. *Psychol Trauma*. 2020; **12(1)**: S17-S21.
8. Bäuerle A TMMVea. Increased generalized anxiety, depression and distress during the COVID-19 pandemic: a cross-sectional study in Germany. *J Public Health (Oxf)*. 2020; p.fdaa106.
9. Choi EPH HBWE. Depression and Anxiety in Hong Kong during COVID-19. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2020; **17(10)**: 3740.
10. Hyland P SMMOea. Anxiety and depression in the Republic of Ireland during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Acta Psychiatr Scand*. 2020; p.10.1111/acps.13219.
11. Chew NWS LGTBea. A multinational, multicentre study on the psychological outcomes and associated physical symptoms amongst healthcare workers during COVID-19 outbreak. *Brain Behav Immun*. 2020; **88**: 559-65.
12. Chang J YYWD. Mental health status and its influencing factors among college students during the epidemic of COVID-19. *Nan Fang Yi Ke Da Xue Xue Bao*. 2020; **40(2)**: 171-6.
13. Liu CH ZEWGSHH. Factors associated with depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptomatology during the COVID-19 pandemic: Clinical implications for U.S. young adult mental health. *Psychiatry Res*. 2020; **290**: 113172.
14. Tan W HFMRa. Is returning to work during the COVID-19 pandemic stressful? A study on immediate mental health status and psychoneuroimmunity prevention measures of Chinese work-force. *Brain Behav Immun*. 2020; **87**: 84-92.
15. Tang F LJZHKMHQWP. COVID-19 related depression and anxiety among quarantined respondents. *Psychol Health*. 2020; 1-15.

-
- 
16. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/>. [Online]; 2020. Disponible en: HYPERLINK "<https://edition.cnn.com/>"<https://edition.cnn.com/>.
 17. World-o-meters. coronavirus. [Online] Acceso 19 de 9de 2020. Disponible en: HYPERLINK "<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>"<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>.
 18. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com>. [Online]; 2020. Disponible en: HYPERLINK "<https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52903680>" <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52903680>.
 19. WHO. <https://www.euro.who.int>. [Online]; 2020. Disponible en: HYPERLINK "https://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/134999/e94837.pdf" https://www.euro.who.int/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/134999/e94837.pdf.