

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL STRESS OF EMPLOYEES IN PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS AT KARACHI

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the human beings all over the world including Pakistan. The major effects of the pandemic are on health, financial, social and most important mental stress. The COVID-19 infected cases worldwide have been exceeding 183 million and death toll has exceeded 3.96 million. The Medical research has succeeded to prepare the vaccine against the virus, trials phase of different vaccines has been completed successfully, now the vaccination phase is going on. Effectiveness or otherwise of the vaccines is still not clear. **OBJECTIVE:** The purpose of our study is to review and evaluate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mental stress of employees in private organizations at Karachi. This research will be helpful for further studies/ evaluation pertaining to the impact of COVID-19 on mental stress and take remedial actions to manage mental stress of general population of Pakistan. **METHOD:** Our study is based on "The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping Theory". We have completed this study with the help of quantitative techniques. The study is conducted on the basis of previous research literature review. We collected data for this study from the employees of 05 Major pharmaceutical organization operating at Karachi through a survey form which was generated and shared online. **RESULT:** Our research results concluded that 75.57% employees of private organization at Karachi, Pakistan of all age groups are facing increased mental stress due to nCOVID-19 pandemic. The stress is still going on as the pandemic could not be curtailed till date.

Keywords: nCOVID-19, Pandemic, Mental Stress and anxiety.

Introduction

The ongoing pandemic COVID-19 has been affecting the masses all over the world including in Pakistan resulting in increase in mental stress. The stress is still going on as the pandemic could not be curtailed till date. This research will be helpful for understanding/managing mental stress, fear, anxiety of employees and for further study/ evaluation pertaining to the impact of COVID 19. The major effects of the pandemic consist of health, financial, social and most important mental stress issues. Mental stress is a

feeling of emotional and physical tension which can come from any event or thought that makes individuals feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. The COVID-19 infected cases have been exceeding 183 Million and caused death toll to 3.96 million. The Medical research has succeeded to prepare the vaccine against the virus, trials phase of different vaccines has been completed successfully, now the vaccination phase is going on. Effectiveness or otherwise of the vaccines is still not clear.

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Objective

To evaluate the impact of nCOVID-19 on mental stress of employees of private organizations at Karachi Pakistan and to inculcate the importance of mental stress free employees of any organization.

To recommend mental stress management and SOPs to avoid spread of the pandemic.

Material and Methods

It was an exploratory research with focus on the impact of nCOVID-19 on mental stress of employees in private organization at Karachi. Quantitative method was used to collect data that will emphasize on verifying the theory by measuring the independent and dependent variables of the research and performing data analysis with statistical procedure. With the help of quantitative technique, we have completed this study and draw the conclusion with mixed method (Pragmatism). This study was basically Quantitative deductive, and descriptive type. We collected responses for this study with the help of online questionnaire/ survey form.

We performed literature review of previous researches for better understanding and comprehension of the pandemic. These articles were related to studies conducted at USA & Canada, (Steven Taylor, 2020), Georgia (Iza Gigauri, 2020), China, (Wanqiu Tan, 2020), China, (Tang et al., 2018; Ho et al., 2020), China, (Yingfei Zhang, 2020), Turkey (Ahmet Tanhan, 2020), Saudi Arabia, (Abdulmajeed A. Alkhamees, 2020).

Results

For this research, we have collected data through online questionnaire survey form from employees of private organization at Karachi. The data was collected from employees of top five pharmaceutical organizations at Karachi (GSK, GETZ, ABBOTT, SEARLE & SAMI Pharma) through online Survey Form.

We selected top five (based on annual turnover) following pharmaceutical organization established and operating at Karachi:

Name	Annual Turnover (Rs)	No. of Employees at Karachi
GSK	32,388 million	2,000
Getz	28,363 million	1300
ABBOTT	26,688 million	1,400 Pakistan
SEARLE	24,561 million	2098
SAMI Pharma	24,055 million	More than 500

Table 1: Summary of Population

The feedback was collected from July 2020 to December 2020. Online survey form was used due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and implementation of SOPs including social distancing imposed by Government of Pakistan. To ensure that the participants are from pharmaceutical organization at Karachi the online Survey Form was shared to employees of pharmaceutical industry employees who were living at Karachi and still working in afore mentioned industry. No monetary rewards were given for completing the questionnaire. Moreover, no one was forced to complete the questionnaire. In addition to questions regarding COVID-19-related distress, the survey form was comprised of measures regarding demographics, current anxiety and depression, and various trait characteristics.

The data was collected based on probability and random sampling to complete the sample size of 95. The data analysis performed through the evaluation of demographics first, then reliability test to evaluate the responses are consistent over the scale, and results are accurate. The correlation analysis performed to evaluate the relationship of variables are connected or not, then the regression analysis applied to evaluate the impact of independent variables on dependent variables.

In our study 65.3% respondent were male and 34.7% female. 25.5 % respondent were from 18 to 25 years, 31.9%, between 26 to 33 years, 27.7% were 34 to 45 years and 14.9% above 45 years of age. As per education level 4% respondent were matric, 20% intermediate, 47.5% graduate and 28.5% post graduates. As regards work experience 18% of the respondent had work experience of less than 1 year, 17% from 1 to 5 years, 22% werewith 5 to 10 years and 43% had more than 10 years.

Reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha test measures the reliability of samples. The ideal value of Cronbach's Alpha test is >80% and the benchmark value is at least >50%. From the above reliability test result, Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.87 or 87%. It means, from the literature the sample are adequate enough for further statistical analysis.

KMO test for sample adequacy test

KMO test measure the adequacy value of samples. The ideal value is >80% and the benchmark value is at least >50%. From the above result, KMO test value is 0.777 or 78 %. This means, the questionnaire or data is reliable enough for further statistical analysis.

Cross Tabulation

A cross-tabulation summarizes the relationship between different variables. Following tables show the relationship of main question i.e. "Feel increased mental stress at work place after outbreak of pandemic", with 04 x demographics (age, gender, education and work experience):

Relationship between Age and increased mental stress at work place after outbreak of pandemic.

- a. From age group 18-25 years; 62.5% felt increased mental stress, 25% remained neutral, whereas only 12.5% had not felt any impact of COVID-19.
- b. Age group 26-33 years; 74.5% felt increased mental stress, 9.7% remained neutral and only 16.6% had not felt any impact of COVID-19.
- c. Age group 33-45 years; 88.4% felt increased mental, 3.8% remained neutral and only 7.1% had not felt any impact.
- d. Age group above 45 years; 76.9% felt increased mental stress, 11.6% remained neutral and only 11.6% did not feel any impact.

At average 75.6 % all age groups have felt increased mental stress due COVID-19.

As far as relationship between Gender and increased mental stress at work place after outbreak of pandemic.

- a. Male; 69.7% were agreed that they felt increased mental stress, 15.2% were remained neutral and only 15.1% had not felt any impact.
- b. Female; - 81.6% were agreed that they felt increa-

sed mental stress, 9.7% were remained neutral and only 9.7% had not felt any impact.

For relationship between education and increased mental stress at work place after outbreak of pandemic.

- a. Matric or below; 75.0% were agreed that they felt increased mental stress and 25.0% had not felt any impact of COVID-19.
- b. Intermediate; 63.1% were agreed that they felt increased mental stress, 26.3% were remained neutral and only 10.5% did not feel any impact of COVID-19.
- c. Graduate; 77.7% were agreed that they felt increased mental stress, 11.1% were remained neutral and only 11.1% did not feel any impact of COVID-19.
- d. Post graduate; 85.2% were agreed that they felt increased mental stress, 3.7% were remained neutral and only 11.1% had not felt any impact of COVID-19.

In terms of relationship between Work experience and increased mental stress at work place after outbreak of pandemic.

- a. Less than 1 year; 52.9% were agreed that they felt increased mental stress, 29.4% were remained neutral and only 17.7% had not felt any impact of COVID-19.
- b. 1-5 years; 64.7% were agreed that they felt increased mental stress, 11.8% were remained neutral and only 23.5% had not felt any impact of COVID-19.
- c. 5-10 years; 81.0% were agreed that they felt increased mental stress, 9.5% were remained neutral and only 9.6% had not felt any impact of COVID-19.
- d. More than 10 years; 90% were agreed that they felt increased mental stress, 5.0% were remained neutral and only 5.0% had not felt any impact of COVID-19.

Discussion

Covid-19 pandemic has increased stress in any field of life as has major effect on our lives badly. Due to this all perspectives of human exercises around the world are gravely affected including sports, amu-

sement, transportation, social gathering, interactions, economy, businesses and health. Many of us are facing challenges that can be stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotional disturbance. Public health actions, such as social distancing and lockdowns are necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but they have made us feel isolated and lonely and results in increased stress and anxiety as well as lead to different psychological problems.⁷ Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way can make us and the people around you become more resilient.

A study performed in China demonstrated that unknown fear leads to multiple mental problems like anxiety, depression.⁸ Different health organizations suggest maintaining social distance by work from home technique, by these type of techniques we will save our self

During the lockdown period, people staying at home are expected to have higher levels of stress especially among individuals with chronic illness, and multiple comorbidities. Study conducted in China by Qiu et al. also confirmed that almost 35% of subjects exhibited emotional distress.⁹ Similarly, a recent survey revealed that 53.8% of respondents assessed COVID-19 outbreak psychological impact as moderate or severe; 8.1% documented moderate to severe levels of stress; 28.8 and 16.5% of the study subjects showed moderate to severe anxiety symptoms, and depressive symptoms, respectively.¹⁰ These results are similar to own study.

In terms of relationship between age and increased mental stress at work place it was observed that around 75 percent people felt that mental stress increased due COVID-19.

Stress was seen more in females. Post graduate peoples felt more stress as compared to matriculate and inter pass candidates

Flint et al. conducted their study in Canada and reported that COVID-19 has direct and indirect adverse physical and psychosocial health consequences.¹¹

Conclusion

Based on the research results, it is concluded that COVID-19 has affected every employee at work place. Result of respondents depicts that the pandemic put more mental stress at work place to employees having

age group 33-45 years (88.4%), female (81.6%) as compare to males (69.7%), Post Graduate (85.2%) and having work experience more than 10 years (90%). Moreover, nCOVID-19 has affected every one of us, changed our daily routine such as increased mental stress at work place for every employee, at home, at market place during shopping, living in isolation, job loss, financial hardship and grief over the death of any relative or friend. As we believe that HR is the most valuable asset of every organization then we have to care of them. We should continuously communicate, plan, support and be consistent for our employees. It is responsibility of HR managers and organizations to give relief to their employees so that they can reduce their mental stress, economic and social issues and perform efficiently for the organizations.

Based on the research results and ongoing damage by the pandemic, we all should strictly follow the SOPs recommended by Government and WHO for our safety and to curtail further expansion of the virus and we should facilitate each other to cope up its effects.

Conflict of Interest: None

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