

Original Article

THE ADULTS' MENTAL HEALTH STATUS DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

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ABSTRACT

This study is to determine the level of stress, anxiety and depression among Malaysian adults during COVID-19 lockdown. It is also to study the mental health distress that affect people based on few different measures and it is based on their mental health status during Covid-19 lockdown. The findings revealed that 67.1% of people have normal level of stress, 5.2% have a severe level of stress and 1.7% have a very severe level of stress. Meanwhile, 40.8% of people have a normal level of anxiety while 8.9% have a severe level of anxiety and 12.9% have a very severe level of anxiety. Moreover, 57.7% of people have a normal level of depression, 9.4% have a severe level of depression while 2.5% have a very severe level of depression. These findings showed that most Malaysian adults are experiencing serious mental health distress as a result of COVID-19 lockdown and measures should be taken to help them overcome this. Therefore, in general, Malaysian adults have poor mental health status during COVID-19 lockdown and authorities as well as government should play an important role to lend a helping hand.

INTRODUCTION

When pandemic first strike, people mostly do not have the full knowledge on COVID-19 and they also do not know how to handle the pandemic. It is not just a problem with virus but other health related problems during pandemic that scared the people worldwide. No enough information is known during that point of time, thus, it is understandable what fear and distress the general public especially people with anxiety issues. Some with mental health conditions usually cannot decipher their own problems and they need professional help. Mental health includes social well-being, psychological as well as emotional aspect. Therefore, it will affects how people feel, think and act accordingly. Nevertheless, how people make choices, handle stress and relate to others are also determined by their mental health. Thus, it is important at all stage of life from childhood, getting through adolescent and also adulthood.

Despite the rising need, COVID-19 epidemic has interfered or ceased key mental health services in 93% of nations globally according to WHO recent assessment. A study has highlights the urgent need for more funding as it is done on 130 nations and

provides the first global evidence of COVID-19 dreadful impact on mental health care access. Before this, global were spending less than 2% of their national funds on mental health which do not satisfy their populations' requirements.

Furthermore, the driving demand for mental health care is driven by epidemic. Mourning, income loss, fear and aloneness can set off mental health problems. Most people tend to have anxiety, sleeplessness as well as increased drug and alcohol usage.

Meanwhile, COVID-19 can trigger mental and neural problems such as agitation, psychosis and also stroke. There's higher chance of severe consequences or even death to people with pre-existing neural, mental or substance-abusing sickness as they are more sensitive to SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Pandemic COVID-19 around the world

The COVID-19 outbreak is labelled as pandemic on March 11, 2020 by WHO as the virus sweep over

the world. to prevent the transmission mission, governments around the world have used various measurements such as lockdowns, social distancing and voluntary self-isolation [1-4]. However, these measures cost people their lives, jobs off, health and wellbeing effects. It is revealed that levels of depressed, anxious symptoms, as well as poor sleep quality are particularly rising in young people. Predictors for containment-related distress may differ according to country.

Internet-based media, digital technology as well as applications like Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp and FaceTime could allow for the maintenance of social contacts and bridge social distance [5,6]. This factor can be stress-relieving. Drug consumption is expected to be boosted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The public health implications of long-term isolation on alcohol use remain unknown, although stress is a significant risk factor for the initiation and maintenance of alcohol abuse [7]. The main goal is to assess public health measures associated with its containment, psychological distress associated with the COVID-19 issue as well as to develop mental health intervention programmes to deal with this problem. Lockdown has greatly influence the young people [1]. Due to proximity to contamination, anxiety is increased in young people, and there is a high intolerance of ambiguity as well as an overload of contact through social networks. Half of the current young sample group is made of students who are consumed by major uncertainties about their future and educational possibilities. They mostly can develop inventive solutions and new skills to deal with the pandemic even though young people are the most mentally distressed. Face-to-face contact cannot be exchanged with contact via digital media and this somehow causes people to worry. Psychological assistance through virtual consultation is available but least likely to be pursued by young individuals [8,9].

Likewise, their anxiety and stress levels can be intensified by exams and distance education as they are involved in new style of teaching and assessment modalities that they are not familiar with, or because of distance supervision, insufficient communication and teachers' monitoring. In order to assist them in communicating with students, it is necessary to propose clear rules for teachers, to provide access to infrastructure that will benefit their well-being like free psychological consultations as well as promotion of access to cultural organizations and also sports [8]. To provide college students with high-quality, timely crisis-oriented psychological treatment, the government and institutions should work together. Hence, to inform student-centered support services and prevent long-term negative consequences whether for working or unemployed youth, a new in-depth study has to be conducted [10,11].

The discoveries disclosed that no work and the free time has lead to anxiety due to a sudden break in people's work routine has resulted in boredom during lockdown. Moreover, financial loss due to loss of job, fear of job loss and salary cuts are among the concerns shared by the employees for their future.

During lockdown, inciting articles, doubtful imagery, false rumours and unconfirmed blog postings circulated by various kinds of media has aggravated the mental health. Public health issue that must not be ignored are coronavirus's psychological effects. It is important for government and policymakers to develop and implement behavioural as well as community-based measures to support toughness. In developing measures to reduce stress and anxiety caused by the COVID-19 lockdown, the findings of this study is expected to assist the government and related bodies, policymakers and healthcare departments [12].

People's sense of self-identity, independence, power and control is provided by work. Lockdown has resulted in no work and free time, which has led to boredom and worry therefore it is an unexpected disruption in their daily pattern. According to some survey, people have started to drink and smoke more out of boredom. According to WHO, this must be stopped immediately or else it will have a negative impact on immune and mental health but for people under COVID-19 pandemic confinement, they believe that drinking alcohol is a beneficial method for coping with anxiety and stress. Financial loss as a result of the COVID-19 lockout is the second most prevalent issue causing anxiety and tension among people [12].

The media such as television, newspaper, radio, internet and social media has kept its readers and viewers up to date on the disease since the outbreak of COVID-19. It has helped encourage people to adopt healthy behaviours and slowing disease spread by providing information on the virus, its mode of transmission, infection risks, precautions and other such advice as it is disseminated through the media and reaches its audience promptly and on time. Nevertheless, people is still confused, fearful, conflicted and anxious leading to stress as there is some biased, deceptive and misleading media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is revealed that a moderating impact between the lockdown and anxiety level is by using the media. To learn more about COVID-19 and its current state, lockdown people are monitoring the news and accessing the internet. In order to cause needless worry and enhance damage perceptions, information about pandemics should not be modified, nor should it be toned down in order to reduce responsibility and encourage carelessness but rather should be kept updated and aware [12].

METHODOLOGY

This is a prospective descriptive, cross-sectional and analytical study. For inclusion, the study have included respondents from all around Malaysia aged 18 years old and above. Study also have excluded respondents who are non-Malaysians and Malaysian aged below 18 years old, indigenous as well as homeless people. Questionnaires are developed with the help of an expert in Psychiatry and used Cronbach's Alpha (.942) to test for reliability and validity of the questions used. The

questionnaire has been randomly spread nationwide and each respondents will remain anonymous. The data mostly focused on their age group, gender, education level, monthly income, living area and internet accessibility. The sample size has been calculated by using formulas and Raosoft® sample size calculator. The calculated sample size is 385 while the actual sample size is 404. The responses that have been recorded are divided into groups for further analyses.

RESULTS

Based on the collected data, analyses has been performed by using IBM SPSS V27. The frequencies of each variable has been noted like socio-demographic characteristics (respondent's gender, age group, education level, monthly income, living area and internet accessibility). Findings have revealed that there is significant relationship between gender and general knowledge of mental health (2, N = 404) = 11.928, $p = .003$. This shows female participants are more likely to have good knowledge of mental health as compared to male. Next, there is significant relationship between education and general knowledge of mental health (8, N = 404) = 145.526, $p = .000$. Bachelor students are more likely to have good knowledge compared to other types of education in regards to mental health. Moreover, there is significant relationship between education and stress level (16, N = 404) = 37.018, $p = .002$. This is because Bachelor students are more likely to have abnormal stress level compared to others. For depression, there is significant relationship between education and depression level (16, N = 404) = 32.328, $p = .009$. For this, Bachelor students are more likely to have abnormal depression level in contrast to others. Lastly, there is significant relationship between income and depression level (12, N = 404) = 27.310, $p = .007$. People with low income are more likely to have abnormal depression as compared to other income group.

DISCUSSIONS

There are a number of preventative measures that can be taken, such as maintaining excellent physical and mental health, learning and putting relaxing techniques into practice, and maintaining good relationships with other people.

Maintaining excellent physical and mental health is crucial in this new era. Exercise not only improves physical health but also acts as a potent stress reliever. Set realistic goals for ourselves and think about non-competitive aerobic activity, weightlifting, or movement practices like yoga or Tai Chi. Endorphins are natural chemicals that improve our mood and help us feel better. It has been demonstrated that aerobic activity releases endorphins.

Next, learn and put relaxing techniques into practice. Everyday relaxation helps to regulate stress and shield the body from its negative consequences. Deep breathing, visualization, gradual muscular

relaxation, and mindfulness meditation are just a few of the approaches we can use. Many web and mobile apps serve as a guide for these tactics; while some need purchases, many are available for free.

Besides that, having a good relationship between relatives and friends might help with mental health distress. People with whom we can discuss our feelings include family and friends. Make sure to discuss our worries and present feelings with reliable people. We might also discuss our issues with them and ask for advice or aid. Be sure to maintain contact while engaging in social distance; for instance, communicate online, via social media, by phone, or via email; many of these options are accessible and cost nothing.

The study has only been done with a limited sample size of 404 respondents among adults in Malaysia, and this sample size cannot represents all the Malaysian community as a whole.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study found that 8.9% have a severe level of anxiety and 12.9% have a very severe level of anxiety. Moreover, 9.4% have a severe level of depression while 2.5% have a very severe level of depression. These findings showed that most Malaysian adults are experiencing serious mental health distress as a result of COVID-19 lockdown and measures should be taken to help them overcome this. Therefore, in general, Malaysian adults have poor mental health status during COVID-19 lockdown. A big sample size and more responders are required to provide outstanding findings in terms of precision.

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