



Psychological and Psychotherapeutic Challenges of COVID-19

Adonis Sfera^{1*}, Amna Siddique¹, Muhammad akram² and Gawel Solowski³

¹University of California, Riverside, Patton State Hospital, Patton, CA, United States

²Department Of Eastern Medicine, Govt College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

³Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics, Faculty of Science and Art, Bingol University, Bingol, 1200, Türkiye.

Corresponding author: Adonis Sfera, University of California, Riverside, Patton State Hospital, Patton, CA, United States, Tel: 714 267 2320; E-mail: dr.sfera@gmail.com

Abstract

On January 30th, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledged the outburst of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), after several cases were reported in China. The virus was believed to have originated in a wholesale seafood market in Wuhan, spreading rapidly throughout the world. Restrictive measures, including quarantine, restraints, and closure of the economies worldwide affected mental health of many individuals. Although this situation could have provided opportunities for personal growth and spending quality time with families, it had the opposite effect, especially on children and adolescents, increasing isolation, abuse, and neuropsychiatric pathology. Lack of socialization, anxiety and stress, triggered neuropathology not only in children and young adults but also in the population at large. The negative effects of lockdowns, including increased prevalence of mental illness, domestic violence, unavailability of treatments contributed to increased morbidity and mortality in population around the globe. This was especially the case in adolescents and children as this group requires special care to properly develop. For example, in Italy where Covid-19 had severe consequences on both physical and mental health, the pandemic took a large toll on children and adolescents.

Keywords: Coronavirus, Mental health issues, Seafood market

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus is a deadly, infectious disease that was acknowledged on January 30th 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO) after the outburst occurred in 34 provinces of China [1] The virus was believed to have originated in a wholesale seafood market in the city of Wuhan and in a short time span affected the population worldwide. Quarantine, lockdowns, and economic hardship were rapidly put in place in many countries, affecting the population morbidity and mortality.

Although the pandemic could have provided opportunities for spending quality time with the family or for personal growth, the pandemic and the implemented drastic epidemiological measures had the opposite effect as they disrupted the psychological development, especially in children and adolescents [2] During this difficult time, anxiety and stress due to lack of socialization, parental discord, domestic violence, and unavailable treatments, affected the mental health of children and adolescents. In many cases, this led to traumatic experiences, that often resulted in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For example, one large study of 5683 individuals during the time of the first lockdown week found that over 40% of people below 30 years of age to struggle with psychological issues, especially PTSD.

In Pakistan where, psychological issues are addressed less often, especially in low socioeconomic status population, the post-pandemic neuropathology was even more severe. As a

result, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee recommended that in national emergencies, psychosocial support was to be provided to the population alongside medical treatments [3].

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF CORONAVIRUS

Unemployment and suicide: The COVID-19 pandemic led to restrictive epidemiological measures that impacted negatively the economy, causing high unemployment, that contributed to increased suicide rates. For example, pre-pandemic studies found that unemployment increased suicide rates by 20 % to 30 % during the economic crises of 2000 and 2011.

Lockdowns and social distancing interfered with psychological interventions, including psychotherapy, contributing to the relapse and exacerbation of mental illness. Although remote psychotherapy provided some support, insufficient number of providers contributed to both exacerbation and new onset of mental illness and substance

Received: April 26, 2023; Revised: May 30, 2023; Accepted: June 02, 2023

Citation: Sfera A, Siddique A, Akram M & Solowski G. (2023) Psychological and Psychotherapeutic Challenges of COVID-19. J Psychol Psychiatry Res, 3(1): 1-2.

Copyright: ©2023 Sfera A, Siddique A, Akram M & Solowski G. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

use disorders. Indeed, depression and suicidal ideation increased dramatically during the pandemic. On the other hand, the society became more receptive to psychiatric pathology, discussing openly and asking questions about stress, depression, and anxiety, which may have contributed to earlier treatments. Furthermore, death, dying, and suicide became topics discussed more openly by the public, likely leading to improved psychosocial support and wider acceptance of psychological or psychiatric interventions [4].

Financial crisis: The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent isolation, social distancing, and lockdowns brought with its economic difficulties, for individuals and families, contributing to increased prevalence of mental illness and suicide in children and adolescents [5].

Domestic Violence and child abuse: The economic downturn promoted significant increase in domestic violence and divorce rates that affected the mental health of children. For example, lockdowns were associated with loss of privacy and independence, contributing to neuropsychiatric pathology. In addition, as the contact with abusive parents was increased by the pandemic, the incidence of child abuse also increased. For example, the UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres reported that domestic violence and child abuse increased dramatically throughout the world, leading to long-term pathology [6].

Quarantine-associated risks: Aside from the economic crises, COVID-19 and isolation increased the prevalence of mental illness, including PTSD which was found in 28 % to 34 % of the affected population. An additional risk of lockdowns was increased sexual abuse of children and adolescents who spent more time online during the pandemic, increasing the risk of falling prey to molesters who would later contact the child in person. For example, studies from Europe have shown increased demand for child pornography during the pandemic, emphasizing further the negative impact of the overzealous epidemiological measures on children and adolescents [7].

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it increased prevalence of psychopathology, especially in children and adolescents along with economic crisis, domestic violence, and abuse, emphasizing that a virus can bring worldwide havoc. On the other hand, the pandemic-linked existential crisis has contributed to lowering the stigma of mental illness.

REFERENCES

1. Velavan TP, Meyer CG (2020) The COVID-19 epidemic. *Trop Med Int Health* 25(3): 278.
2. Fegert JM, Vitiello B, Plener PL, Clemens V (2020) Challenges and burden of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic for child and adolescent mental health: A narrative review to highlight clinical and

research needs in the acute phase and the long return to normality. *Child Adolesc Psychiatry Ment Health* 14: 20.

3. Tullio V, Perrone G, Bilotta C, Lanzarone A, Argo A (2020) Psychological support and psychotherapy via digital devices in Covid-19 emergency time: Some critical issues. *Med Leg J* 88(2): 73-76.
4. Kawohl W, Nordt C (2020) COVID-19, unemployment, and suicide. *Lancet Psychiatry* 7(5): 389-390.
5. Barnett ML, Mehrotra A, Landon BE (2020) Covid-19 and the upcoming financial crisis in health care. *NEJM Catal Innov Care Deliv* 1(2): 45-50.
6. Bucierius SM, Roberts BW, Jones DJ (2021) The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic violence and child abuse. *J Community Safety Well-Being* 6(2): 75-79.
7. Li W, Zhang Y, Wang J, Ozaki A, Wang Q, et al. (2021) Association of home quarantine and mental health among teenagers in Wuhan, China, during the COVID-19 pandemic. *JAMA Pediatr* 175(3): 313-316.