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## **Psychological impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the Diyala province**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

( فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۖ  
وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ  
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رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا )

صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ

## الإهداء

إلى أمي وأبي  
إلى إخوتي وأهلي  
إلى مشرفتي  
إلى زملائي وزميلاتي  
إلى كل من علمني حرفاً  
أهدي هذا البحث المتواضع راجيةً  
من المولى  
عز وجل أن يجد القبول والنجاح

آية

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# **Psychological impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the Diyala province**

## **ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic sweeps across the world, it is causing widespread concern, fear and stress, all of which are natural and normal reactions to the changing and uncertain situation that everyone finds themselves in.

**Method:** The study was conducted in a sample of 100 adult participants from the general community population, collected across different ages. Participants completed self-report measures of perceived threat of COVID-19, compassion (for self, for others, from others) depression, anxiety, mental stress, and social safeness.

**Results:** People are likely to be experiencing worry, anxiety and fear and older people are also those with underlying health conditions, having been identified as more vulnerable to COVID-19, can be extremely frightening and very fear-inducing. Medical staff and affiliated healthcare workers (staff) are under both physical and psychological pressure.

**Conclusion:** The COVID-19 pandemic is exceptional. Its effect will likely be imprinted on each individual involved. Extensive stressors will emerge or become worsened. Many medical staff workers will be harmfully psychologically affected.

**Key Words:** COVID-19, Psychiatry, Pandemic, Mental health.

## INTRODUCTION

In January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease, COVID-19, to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. WHO stated that there is a high risk of COVID-19 spreading to other countries around the world. In March 2020, WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.

WHO and public health authorities around the world are acting to contain the COVID-19 outbreak [WHO,2020].

However, this time of crisis is generating stress throughout the population. The considerations presented in this document have been developed by the WHO Department of Mental Health and Substance Use as a series of messages that can be used in communications to support mental and psychosocial well-being in different target groups during the outbreak [WHO, 2019]. COVID-19 pandemic not only affects physical health, but also mental health and well-being.

The current pandemic is changing priorities for the general population, but it is also challenging the agenda of health professionals, including that of psychiatrists and other mental health professionals [Fiorillo and Gorwood, 2020].

Everywhere in the world, psychiatric clinics are modifying their practice in order to guarantee care and support to persons with mental health problems, but also to those who are not mentally ill and are suffering from the psychosocial consequences of the pandemic.

The number of those who will need psychiatric help is going to increase in the next weeks or months, requiring a reconsideration of our current practices. From a psychopathological viewpoint, the current pandemic

is a relatively new form of stressor or trauma for mental health professionals [Xiang et al., 2020].

COVID-19, the infection caused by the novel coronavirus detected in December 2019, raising concerns of widespread panic and increasing anxiety and although the effects of the coronavirus on mental health have not been systematically studied, it is anticipated that COVID-19 will have rippling effects, especially based on current public reactions.

It is imperative to determine the prevalence of adverse mental health issues in a society during this pandemic and mitigate its psychological risks and consequences. To date, there are no more studies that examine the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the general population in Iraq. Therefore, this study aims to establish the prevalence of psychiatric symptoms and identify risk and protective factors contributing to psychological stress among patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The current study aims to review of the latest papers referring to the psychiatric and psychological effects of pandemic in the general population. The search was done on 100 persons from different generations and different places. It focused in all studies concerning COVID-19 pandemic and psychiatry.

## **Materials and Methods:**

This quantitative survey was conducted from 1 to 30 December 2021 in Baquba Region. A total of 100 adult participants (aged 18 and above) took

part in the survey and were eligible after reading the purpose of the study. If they agreed then they could proceed to complete the questionnaire. Each statement is rated on a scale of 4 (0 = did not apply to me at all, and 3 = applied to me most of the time). Higher scores indicate higher levels of the condition. Answering the questionnaire lasts 5 minutes on average by only clicking the checkbox for answering. Questionnaire respondents were asked about the extent to which they were personally impacted by COVID-19, and symptoms related to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic disorder, and emotional distress. SPSS version 24 was used for statistical analysis after the data were automatically recorded in the Excel file of the survey and then imported to the SPSS. Demographic variables were described using frequencies and percentages.



## Results and Discussion

Table (1) shows that the gender distribution of students shows that 65% females and 35% males that precipitated in this search aim to see the effect of covid 19 on psychological and mental health and symptoms of it. Also table (2) shows that 97% of study persons receive the corona vaccine while 3% did not receive the corona vaccine.

The results should be interpreted in the context of the current situation where people were under lockdown during the pandemic. We do not know the levels of anxiety, stress, and depression before the pandemic therefore we don't know whether there was an increase from prior levels or not. This requires further research to see how these rates might change over time, and also to explore how people feel the short-terms and long-term impact of the situation on their mental health

<b>Table: (1) distribution of Gender</b>			
		Percent %	Cumulative Percent %
Valid	Female	65	65
	Male	35	100.0
	Total	100.0	

<b>Table: (2) Did you receive the corona vaccine?</b>			
		Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	3	3
	Yes	97	100.0
	Total	100.0	

The results in Table 3 referred to people who found it hard to wind down that 28% don't apply to them, while 30% applied to them some degree or some of the time then 20% applied to them considerable degree or good part of time and 22% applied to them very much or most of the time.

<b>Table: (3) I found it hard to wind down</b>			
		Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Did not apply to me at all	28	28
	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	30	58
	Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time	20	78
	Applied to me very much or most of the time	22	100.0
	Total	100.0	

The current study is probably the important to investigate common mental health problems during the pandemic which a large sample that could provide meaningful analysis. However, the sample was convenient as the survey was made available through college students to respond, and this might have caused selection bias. People who have participated were also people with more awareness and concerns about their health. Thus, the results might not be generalizable to the adult population.

One on more important clinical signs appeared on people were aware of dryness of mouth that about 40% don't apply to them and 41% applied to them some degree or some of the time while 14% applied to them considerable degree or good part of time and 5% applied to them very much or most of the time [Table 4].

<b>Table: (4) I was aware of dryness of my mouth</b>			
		Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Did not apply to me at all	40	40
	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	41	81
	Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time	14	95
	Applied to me very much or most of the time	5	100.0
	Total	100.0	

The current study showed there are people who experienced breathing difficulty that were 38% don't apply to them and 32% applied to them some degree or some of the time while 13% applied to them considerable degree or good part of time. Also 17% applied to them very much or most of the time [Table 5]

<b>Table: (5) I experienced breathing difficulty (e.g. excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)</b>			
		Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Did not apply to me at all	38	38
	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	32	70
	Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time	13	83
	Applied to me very much or most of the time	17	100.0
	Total	100.0	

Our study which is unique of being undertaken at the time of the lockdown in the ending of the pandemic provides valuable findings on prevalence and factors associated with depression, anxiety, and stress. We found high levels of depression and anxiety among the study through many factors which are studied. Our results conform with a study done on the general population in Italy showing that COVID-19 outbreak has had a psychological effect on the people [Moccia et al., 2020].

<b>Table: (6) I experienced trembling (e.g. in the hands)</b>			
		Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Did not apply to me at all	50	50
	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	21	71
	Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time	19	90
	Applied to me very much or most of the time	10	100.0
	Total	100.0	

The COVID-19 outbreak has globally affected and is still affecting youth mental health. This study review indicates a significant impact of the pandemic and the lockdown measures for several mental symptoms including anxiety, mental distress, depression, psychological wellbeing, and sleep habits of young people.

The psychological impact was related to the experience of several intensive stressors, such as academic perspectives, massive e-learning adoption, economic obstacles, social restrictions, and daily living side effects related to the COVID-19 outbreak (Jennifer et al., 2020).

<b>Table: (7) I found myself getting agitated</b>			
		Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Did not apply to me at all	24	24
	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	36	60
	Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time	23	83
	Applied to me very much or most of the time	17	100.0
	Total	100.0	

Our results agreement with Michael et al., (2020) who found during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines, one-fourth of the respondents reported moderate-to-severe anxiety, one-seventh reported moderate-to-severe stress levels and one sixth reported moderate-to-severe depression and psychological impact of the outbreak. Female gender, youth age of 12-21 years, single status, students, presence of specific physical symptoms (i.e., headache, cough, chills), recent imposed quarantine by a health authority, prolonged stay at home, poor self-reported health status, feeling of too much unnecessary worry has been made about COVID-19, concerns about family members getting sick, and feeling of being discriminated by other countries were associated with a greater psychological impact of the pandemic and higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression. perception of good health status and confidence in their own health care providers were associated with lesser psychological impact of the pandemic and lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression. The findings of this study can be used to frame appropriate psychological interventions to avert occurrence of mental health problems preventing psychological crisis.

<b>Table: (8) I felt I was close to panic</b>			
		Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Did not apply to me at all	66	66
	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	22	88
	Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time	9	97
	Applied to me very much or most of the time	3	100.0
	Total	100.0	

Many people who were unable to become enthusiastic about anything that 18% applied to them very much or most of the time while 41% don't apply to them then 30% applied to them some degree or some of the time and 11% applied to them considerable degree or good part of time [Table 9]

<b>Table: (9) I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything</b>			
		Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Did not apply to me at all	41	41
	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	30	71
	Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time	11	82
	Applied to me very much or most of the time	18	100.0
	Total	100.0	

Table (10) showed that people were aware of the action of their heart in the absence of physical exertion (e.g. sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat) and referred 33% don't apply to them and 23% applied to them some degree or some of the time while 30% applied to them considerable degree or good part of time and 14% applied to them very much or most of the time.

<b>Table: (10) was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (e.g. sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)</b>			
		Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Did not apply to me at all	33	33
	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	23	56
	Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time	30	86
	Applied to me very much or most of the time	14	100.0
	Total	100.0	

On another hand the results of our study agreement with Niaz and Nasih (2020) they showed a high prevalence of depression in the adult populations of Kurdistan Region during the COVID-19 pandemic and identified a number of significant factors associated with these mental health problems. The findings could serve as a baseline for future studies to assess the impact of the pandemic on mental health of the population. The study could also draw attention of researchers to this important and largely overlooked aspect of population health populations especially at these difficult times where the pandemic, the disruptive measures, and the financial hardship could all join to exert a more negative impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Increasing public awareness of depression, anxiety, and stress and coping strategies is essential to promote mental health. We believe that this and further research on this issue can help inform mental interventions to prevent and mitigate the negative mental health impact of the pandemic.

<b>Table: (11) I felt scared without any good reason</b>			
		Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	Did not apply to me at all	43	43
	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	39	82
	Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time	11	93
	Applied to me very much or most of the time	7	100.0
	Total	100.0	



## **Conclusion and recommendation**

This narrative review highlighted the relevance of focusing on preventive and strategic actions on mental health for young people during the pandemic and the urgent need afterward for psychological and supportive interventions. Youth mental health actions should be the priority and challenge for drawing strategic plans in the future:

- A:- to determine and implement desired mental health consultations;
- B:- to develop additional resources for direct mental health service to high-need youth.
- C:- to maximize peer support and exchange of ideas;
- D:- to increase the level of cultural competency of mental health services and approach; and
- E:- to create more within-program resources for mental health.

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