

# COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS

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## INTRODUCTION

*The COVID-19 Pandemic had several impacts on the world regarding health, lifestyle, and the economy. This major virus outbreak, Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), presented a major hazard to the mental health of the global populace<sup>1</sup>. According to WHO, mental health is the state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community<sup>2</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic may have had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of people due to its disruption of the general ability to work productively and make a significant contribution to the community at large.*

*The COVID-19 pandemic has caused increased levels of anxiety, because of the uncertainty that came with a novel, unknown disease, and the anxiety that came with the fear of infection. The pandemic may also have worsened the mental health of those with pre-existing mental illnesses. This may be due to limitations in their access to mental health services<sup>3</sup>, and the experience of pandemic-related isolation, fear, and worry among others (4). The global prevalence of anxiety and depression, increased by 25%<sup>4</sup>. The impact of COVID-19 has been immense in SubSaharan Africa, due to fear, anxiety and, direct impact of disease on self or loved ones<sup>5</sup>. In Nigeria, up to 49% of the population reported anxiety during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>6</sup>. This article will examine the mental health impacts of the pandemic on several categories of people.*

## EPIDEMIOLOGY OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC-RELATED MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

### Age

Older adults were more likely to have mental health problems. In China, 23% of adults older than 55 years had preexisting depression that worsened during the Pandemic; This resulted from factors like physical distancing or fear of death<sup>7</sup>.

However, a survey in Belgium showed that people between the ages of 16 and 24 were most affected<sup>8</sup>. A study showed an increase in anxiety in youths during the Pandemic<sup>9</sup>.

Studies showed that older children and adolescents exhibit more depressive symptoms, higher stress levels, worry, fear, and concern, because of COVID-19 than younger children<sup>10,11</sup>.

### Gender

A nationwide survey in China during the Pandemic showed that women were more affected physiologically than men. This difference may be attributed to how women are usually more affected by traumatic events because many women take on domestic and professional roles. Multiple studies showed that women were more affected by maladaptive

health behavior and psychosomatic ill health in most studies<sup>12,13,14</sup>.

Studies reported that girls had higher levels of worry, concern, and fear related to COVID-19 than boys in young children<sup>15,16</sup>.

## EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF SPECIFIC POPULATION GROUPS

### Effects On People With Preexisting Mental Health Conditions

The physiological health of COVID-19 positive individuals with preexisting mental health conditions has also differed from individuals with no such history. A study using 76 psychiatric patients and 109 healthy control subjects showed that worries about health, anger issues, impulsivity, and suicidal ideation were higher in psychiatric patients than in controls with no history of preexisting mental health conditions<sup>17</sup>. People with mental illness possess risk factors that make them more vulnerable to adverse health outcomes during pandemics. These risk factors include socioeconomic factors, health system, and clinical risk factors<sup>18</sup>.

### Effect Of Covid-19 On The Mental Health Of Covid-19

## Patients

A China study showed that 96.2% of COVID-19 patients experienced posttraumatic stress symptoms that may linger for as long as two years<sup>19</sup>. A study showed that COVID-19 patients experienced higher levels of depression than controls that had not gotten COVID-19. High levels of posttraumatic stress were seen in those who have recovered from CoVID-19, particularly the symptomatic. A cross-sectional study also noted a mild level of depression and anxiety (20). COVID-19 survivors may also require interdisciplinary care due to the long-term consequences of COVID-19.

## Effect On The Mental Health Of Health Care Personnel

The COVID-19 Pandemic was a tasking force on healthcare workers worldwide. Several members of the healthcare system experienced physiological symptoms such as increased anxiety, insomnia, depression, posttraumatic stress, and distress. Studies showed that 50.4% to 74% of all health workers reported showing some of these symptoms<sup>21,5</sup>. This decline in mental health was due to the pressure from the Pandemic in exhaustion, fear of being infected or infecting loved ones, separation from families, and the pain of loss of colleagues and patients<sup>22</sup>. Healthcare workers face several ethical and moral dilemmas that create physiological stress. The poor mental health was also fueled by the unavailability of personal protective equipment and standard treatment protocol. They have to choose between their health against the call of duty to care for their patients. The COVID-19 Pandemic has had an especially significant effect on nurses. This effect is because they spend the most time with patients making them more vulnerable to suicidal feelings<sup>23</sup>. There was a rise in suicides of healthcare workers during the Pandemic<sup>24</sup>.

## RISE OF TELEMENTAL HEALTH AND DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTH TOOLS DURING THE PANDEMIC.

The Pandemic led to a massive increase in the use of telemedicine<sup>25</sup>. Digital mental health is a term that covers services offered through digital devices to improve mental health conditions; they have transformed the ease with which individuals can access mental healthcare. The Pandemic greatly limited physical contact. Therefore, telemedicine proved to be a good way for physicians to interact with their patients. However, some patients have reported a negative impression of telemental health due to external factors such as poor network, lack of private space at home, or lack of communication devices<sup>26</sup>. Telemental health has helped deliver quality care when healthcare providers or patients are in remote areas<sup>27</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 Pandemic had a huge impact on global mental health. According to a scientific release by the World Health Organization, the global prevalence of anxiety and depression rose by 25%. This global decline in mental health is due to several factors such as social isolation, loneliness, and uncertainty<sup>28</sup>. The Pandemic has also shown what portions of the population are most vulnerable to declining mental health.

The Pandemic has changed the way the world views mental health. It has also promoted the accessibility of mental healthcare to remote areas through telemental health.

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