

## EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON MENTAL HEALTH

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The COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting economic and social consequences have significantly affected the mental health of the individuals.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, related literature on the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health is scarce.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, COVID-19 pandemic has profound effects on public mental health and their routine activities. Anxiety, sleep disturbance and overall lower perceived state of health are among some of the adverse effects.<sup>3</sup> It has been reported that health organizations across the globe are working in coordination to cope with the mental health issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup> The mental state of individuals vary based on their health, profession and status.<sup>5</sup>

Most importantly, mental health issues are common in quarantined and self-isolated individuals. It might be due to loneliness, fear of death and separation from their family members.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, children, who have less interaction with their school friends on daily basis, may suffer from psychological problems. Additionally, separation from parents and friends can cause grief in children. They may encounter distress, anxiety, and loneliness; all of which affects their psychological health.<sup>7</sup>

Elderly people are highly susceptible to the COVID-19 outbreak as they are already prone to autoimmune, neurovascular, cardiovascular and psychological disorders. Social isolation among the elderly may cause irritating and shouting behaviour and emotional anger.<sup>8</sup> Health care professionals are at the forefront of the battle to tackle the COVID-19. Therefore, fear of getting infection, extended work shifts, dealing with COVID-19 patients, inaccessibility to COVID-19 medicine, deaths of their colleagues at line of work, exposure to COVID-19, self-isolation, and keeping distance from friends and family can adversely affect their mental health.<sup>2</sup>

In general, individuals who recover from COVID-19 disease may face social stigma and get emotional disturbance. Each of us have a different attitude towards people who recovered from COVID-19. Health care workers who try to save people's lives and limit the spread of COVID-19 can also face stigmatization for potentially being carriers of the COVID-19.<sup>2</sup>

The COVID-19 is a world problem, so concrete efforts are needed to address this pandemic at a global level. In the case of Pakistan, it is the responsibility of the Pakistani government to implement effective strategies to fight the Covid-19, as per the guidelines set by the World Health Organization (WHO).

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