

SCRIPT ON
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF COVID – 19 EPIDEMIC
ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SRI LANKA



SYNDICATE 12

RESTRICTED

DS COMMENT

TITLE PAGE

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the psychological impact of COVID-19 on university students of Sri Lanka. It identifies solutions for psychological impact of University students. Study enable the researcher to study and explain about how the COVID -19 impacted the University students. In the present scenario University students faced lot of issues other than the academic problems. So in this study we have studied the problems and solutions that can we take to prevent the issues.

CONTENT

1. Introduction
2. Review of Literature
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INTRODUCTION

1. In December 2019, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic emerged in Wuhan, China, started to spread nationwide, and subsequently attracted worldwide attention. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently declared COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) (WHO, 2020). According to the United Nation's Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the pandemic has interrupted the learning of more than one billion students in 129 countries around the world. Many universities worldwide have moved to emergency remote teaching (ERT) via online platforms, further inducing anxiety among the students.

2. Mental illness can impact the inspiration, attention, and social experiences of students in higher education. The mental health of multiple impacted groups has been called into light by the COVID-19 pandemic. The presence of epidemics is known to accentuate or generate new stressors, including anxiety and care for oneself or loved ones, physical mobility restrictions and social interactions due to quarantine, and changes in abrupt and radical lifestyles. Corona viruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause a wide range of illnesses, from the common cold to more dangerous diseases. The novel corona virus outbreak (COVID-19) first detected in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, has grown rapidly. On 30 January 2020, the WHO Director-General announced that the new disease was a globally important public health emergency and that the outbreak was declared a pandemic by COVID-19 on 12 March 2020.

3. Until 03 December 2020, approximately 67.3 million confirmed cases, approximately 43.2 million recovered, and more than 1.54 million confirmed deaths were reported worldwide. More than 28,580 confirmed cases were reported in Sri Lanka, nearly 20,804 recovered, and 140 deaths were reported. The most affected countries are India, China, the United States, Brazil, and together they account for 75% of the region's recorded cases. Sri Lanka announced a confirmed case of a novel coronavirus for the first time on 27 January 2020. On 3 March 2020, the first recorded case of Sri Lankan origin outside Sri Lanka was reported in Italy. As of 23 March, the Sri Lankan Army had set up 45 quarantine centers in the country to fight the coronavirus pandemic as a preventive measure. recent figures indicate that a significantly higher proportion of people who were sheltering in place (47%) reported negative effects on mental wellbeing resulting from coronavirus-related concern or stress than among those who were sheltering in place.

4. It is anticipated that the persistent dissemination of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), stringent exclusion measures, and delays in beginning schools, colleges, and universities around the world will impact university students' mental health. No comprehensive research on the psychological consequences of university students of Sri Lanka confronting the crisis has been undertaken, considering its mental health implications. Therefore, this research aims to demonstrate the psychological effect of the outbreak of COVID-19 among university students in the Sri Lanka and its related causes. This discovery will continue to improve mental health services for people during the epidemic as baseline evidence for decision makers and programmers.

5. Exclusion and quarantine refer to the isolation of people who have been diagnosed with and suspected of having an infectious disease. Both steps have been used to intercept the infection chain and reduce the risk of infectious diseases breaking out in the population. As the disease is extremely infectious, nearly all countries around the world have been greatly infected and containment steps have been implemented, including requiring people to self-isolate at home (even those without signs of infection) and closing workplaces and schools. Measures to deter the dissemination of COVID-19 have been successful, but questions have emerged about their possible psychological effects.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

6. Nature of the learning process is very complex and effective to a university student. In a pandemic situation university student were unable to participate to the lectures. Nature of the learning process had changed and psychologically it creates a different type of changes in undergraduates' minds.

7. Goal is the object of a person's ambition not only for student but also most people have goals in their lives. The successfulness in situational guidance had changed due to the pandemic situation and it make a delay with lectures and university life. If the student is very target-oriented person this situation might be a psychological harmful for a student. because that motivation cannot be gain through the learning process.

8. Student is a person who is studying at a university or other place of higher education. He might be guided by a group of people; lectures supervisors' group friends were included to it but according to the COVID-19 pandemic learning process was converted to a virtual platform. Because of that they partake kind of freedom. Sometimes they might face for avoidable study process. Then they missed the feedback from their guardians.

Interpersonal relationship and communication are critical to both the teaching and learning process and the social development of students. Teacher student peer relationship reduced by the pandemic indirectly. Because of that supportively from others could be reduce.

Interpersonal reduced by the pandemic according to online and virtual study systems without gathering students in university.

OBJECTIVES

9. For university students, the COVID-19 pandemic was a time of upheaval. The main objective of this analysis was to examine the factors associated with higher levels of mental health burden among a group of Sri Lankan undergraduate university students. Severely affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. To find measurements to reduce the psychological impact of COVID-19 The main objective of this research is to study about the psychological impact of the COVID 19 epidemic on university students in Sri Lanka, study how to give the effective solution to it.

- a. Learn about the psychological impact of the COVID 19 epidemic on university students in Sri Lanka
- b. To identify how the pandemic has affected to the personal lives of the students.
- c. To identify measures to minimize the effects of psychological impacts on University students.

Research Questions

10. Our research is based on below research questions
 - a. What is the psychological impact of COVID-19 Pandemic among university students?
 - b. What are the problems that arise in students' personal lives with the Pandemic?
 - c. What steps can be taken to minimize the effects of psychological impacts on University students?

METHODOLOGY

11. This contained research design, method of data collection, population of the study, sample techniques. This chapter initially explains how the data collection phase is conducted, all the methods used, and why those methods are essential for this study. Semi structured interview were planned to understand the mental health issues associated with Covid-19 pandemic of university students in Sri Lanka.

a. The Sample

Purposive Sampling technique under non-probability sampling was used to collect the sample. Researchers used different methods like Social Media groups and other private connections to collect a sample of fifty undergraduates from both state and private universities in Sri Lanka. The only inclusion criteria was that participants should have to be enrolled as undergraduate students in Sri Lankan university at the time of the interviews.

b. Method of data collection

Primary & Secondary Data

- i. Primary sources can also be referred to as primary data. It is the “firsthand data and information”. Primary data was gathered from semi-structured interviews.
- ii. Secondary sources were referred to obtain secondary data. Secondary data obtained were already available for reference from sources such as the internet, journals, research material, abstracts, and books. Further, recently conducted lectures, addresses by various intellectuals on the Psychological Impact of the COVID-19 Epidemic in University students in Sri Lanka were used in developing this research and as secondary data.
- iii. The researchers collected the required primary data through semi structured interviews with Sri Lankan undergraduates. By referring to the literature, the researchers understood that semi structured interviews as the best way to grab the real time true information regarding psychological impact over them.
- iv. These semi-structured interviews were conducted using online platforms such as zoom and also through social media such as viber, messenger and whatsapp. An interview guideline was used to conduct the semi-structured interview.

- v. As it is a psychological aspect, face - face interviewing was the best method to collect the data. (Kabir 2016). Therefore, the researchers attempted to have video conferencing and video calls as much as possible with their consent.

Semi-structured Interviews

- vi. 50 semi-structure interviews were conducted with the sample. Each interview was around 20-30 minutes of duration. As the syndicate group consists of 12 members, each member conducted around 4-5 interview
- vii. The first part of the interview was to get a general idea about the psychological health of the participants, by asking them how they feel and do
- viii. In the next questions participants for the interview were asked that whether their anxiety and stress level increased, decreased or remain same due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation. The next question asked about how the peers of participants' anxiety and stress levels increased, decreased, or remained the same due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation.
- ix. Another question asked from the undergraduates was about counseling/psychological support services or any other available method of support for them.

c. Data analysis

- i. In the data analysis part there are so many techniques to analysis qualitative data.
- ii. It can be changed according to the researcher choice and the quality of data collected. According thematic analysis was used to analyses the data.
- iii. The process of thematic included, first the transcribing of the data. All the researchers who conducted the interviews had got consent from the participants to record the data. Then the recorded data were transcribed by the researchers. Then the researchers compiled the transcripts and did the coding, categorization and derived themes from the categories.

Research ethics

- i. This research is about the psychological impact of individuals and particular attention and consideration about these individuals' privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were of high priorities. Therefore, the researchers adhered the British Psychological Association's Code of Ethics in conducting research with human participants. The following methods were used to safeguard the ethics in the research.
- ii. Each individual privacy was protected and their personal information were kept secret.
- iii. The objective and purpose of the study were verified briefly to the study participants through an Information Sheet about the research and confidentiality was assured. Finally, oral consent was obtained from study participants before conducting the interview.
- iv. They had the right to withdraw from the interview at any time and had the right to delete their recorded sessions and all the information collected from them

FINDINGS

12. Theme 1- **Poor general well-being**

According to the majority of the group (75%) expressed that they are not feeling good and not feeling well these days. They referred the reason as the changes happen to their daily routines as a result of Covid-19. They complained about both physical and mental unfitness.

13. Theme 2- **Difficulty with concentration**

Due to multiple causes of diversion, a strong majority of participants (89 %) reported difficulties focusing on academic work. Nearly half of them (46%) indicated that their home was a nice atmosphere and a great place to rest rather than study. Participants noticed that their family members and domestic duties at home were more likely to disturb them. Lack of transparency (12%) and social media, the internet, and computer games (11%) were other influences impacting the concentration of pupils. Some (10%) reported that due to lack of interactions and excessive exposure to a computer screen, online classes were vulnerable to distraction.

14. Theme 3 - **Disruption to Sleep Patterns**

A majority of respondents (86%) reported disturbances to their sleep habits induced by the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than one-third (38%) experiencing extreme such disruptions. Half (50 percent of students who registered any disturbance said they preferred to sit up longer or get up later than they did before the outbreak of COVID-19. Irregular sleep habits, such as irregular time to go to bed and wake up from day to day (17 percent), are another destructive influence caused by the pandemic. Some (7 percent) registered improved sleep hours, while others (6 percent) had poor quality of sleep.

15. Theme 4 - **Increased Social Isolation**

A majority of participants responded that the degree of social alienation (86%) has risen in the pandemic. More than half of these students (54%) suggested that their cumulative experiences with other persons such as peers have substantially declined. Around a third (31%) expressed their thoughts about a lack of in-person experiences, such as face-to-face meetings, in particular.

16. Theme 5 - **Concerns about academic performance**

A majority of participants (82%) shared anxiety about the pandemic's effect on their academic success. The transition to online classes (38%) was the largest perceived obstacle. Participants shared their doubts, in particular, about abrupt shifts in the syllabus, the content of the courses, technological difficulties with online apps and the complexity of online learning. Because of pressures put in order to preserve social isolation and the avoidance of physical contact with other students, several participants (23%) were uncertain about success in study and class projects. The confusion about their grades in the online learning environment was stated by some participants (14%) as a major stressor. Others (8%) suggested their lowered learning enthusiasm and propensity to procrastinate.

17. Theme 6 - **Financial Difficulties**

About half of the participants (59 percent) shared their reservations about the effect of COVID-19 on their financial conditions. Many (38%) indicated that COVID-19 has affected their own existing and potential work prospects, such as part-time jobs and internships, or is likely to affect them. In the aftermath of COVID-19, some (18%) exposed the financial struggles of their family members, mainly parents, being laid off or taking pay cuts.

18. Theme 7 - **Increased Class Workload**

The impact of COVID-19 among college students on the class workload was not definitive. While marginally more than half of respondents (54%) registered an improvement in their academic workload due to COVID-19, the remainder reported that the workload remained the same (36%) or either decreased (10%). For those who were facing elevated workloads, considering the lack of in-person assistance from teachers or teaching assistants, almost half (48 percent) felt they needed to improve their own attempts to keep up with online courses and class assignments. About one-third (31 percent) of the participants perceived that tasks had improved or become more difficult to do.

19. Theme 8 - **Depressive Thoughts**

When asked about the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on suicidal thinking, 44 percent said during the COVID-19 pandemic that they had some depressed thoughts. Loneliness (33%), insecurity or confusion (12%), powerlessness or hopelessness (10%), worries over academic success (8%), and over thinking (5%) were major contributors to certain suicidal feelings.

20. Theme 9 - **Changes in the Living Environment**

A substantial number of respondents (67%) said the pandemic had led to important changes in their living standards. Many of these students (68 percent) referred to living with family members as being less independent and more distracted a from the environment. Reduced romantic relationships of roommates with others who lived either on or off campus in their apartment (14 percent) was a main improvement in their living climate.

21. Theme 10 - **Less Psychological Support**

When the researchers raised the question about the counseling and other psychological support facilities, majority of them (85%) informed that there aren't sufficient psychological support services from the universities. Whereas some students (10%) informed that they reach the doctors, counsellors and psychologists they know personally for some support. A few (3%) informed that they use online counselling and other support services to get psychological support.

22. Theme 11 - **Support from family, relatives and peers**

65% of the group revealed that staying at home is a burden and it increases their stress. They have no practice of discussing their problems with family members and hardly maintain a close relationship with relatives to discuss such issues. However, nearly 75% informed that they prefer to discuss their issues with peers, but as they are not physically meeting their colleagues, there are restrictions to that as well. They can't share everything over the phone with the fear of parents' listening to them or with difficulties in bearing mobile cost.

Recommendations

12. As according to our findings, we recommend some solutions for the above problems that we have found. Universities has to introduced online facilities to work with their colleagues during the pandemic. It will make the students feel more comfortable about the working situation and the home environment. It also quite clear that it will make more comfortable situation to study with a normal presence of mind. Students have to adapt to the new life pattern with this situation. They must ensure that usual pattern of sleep is obstructed and go on with the new system of lifestyle.

13. Increased in social distancing make the students isolate in their homes and living hood. Lacking face to face meetings in the studies make students vulnerable to other addictions.

14. The results also suggest that the university students' involvement in private tuition is a critical factor in understanding the increased prevalence of depression and anxiety among them. A significant number of students are involved in part-time jobs, such as private tuition, to finance their educational expenses, and sometimes to support their families, and their reliance on private tutoring as a part-time job is increasing gradually.

15. We recommended the solutions that will benefit the problems of university students of Sri Lanka. university should closely monitor the vulnerability of students to stressors and mental health status. Also Develop mental health programme.

16. Government and private agencies and health-care providers need to offer consulting and mental health services. Impose health-care programs in multiple television outlets. Universities need to need to address clearly to the students about changes and the impact of online learning programs. Educational programs and workshops for students need to conduct. Universities need to motivate and guide students that have psychological problems.

17. Universities need to be discussing and agreeing with students how they will progress their research during this period. universities could also consider offering students the choice to complete the outcomes. And also, Parents should encourage their children to let them know if they're not feeling well. Parents should have a calm, proactive conversation with their children about the coronavirus

DISCUSSION

13. Psychological impact of covid-19 pandemic on university students in Sri Lanka may mostly be wickered but in some instances it affects positively. Basically it depends on various circumstances of students such as family background, future plans, relationships, freedom, technological knowledge etc. In the aftermath of the pandemic, by conducting online survey interviews, it was found that most participants encountered heightened stress and anxiety due to COVID-19. Furthermore, among our participants, the findings indicated mild levels of tension. This is in line with Health department of Sri Lanka's latest pre-COVID survey. Among the symptoms of the pandemic described, questions about one's own wellbeing and loved ones' health were the most common, accompanied by difficulties focusing. These results are in line with recent research in China that have also found questions regarding one's own and family wellbeing.

14. During the pandemic, participants became exceedingly common in the general population. Difficulty in concentration, also demonstrated by our participants, has previously been found to negatively impact the self-confidence of students, and has known associations with elevated stress and increased stress. Mental wellbeing. Compared to tension and fear in the general life of college students, it seems that countermeasures against COVID-19, such as shelter-in-place directives and social distancing activities, may have underpinned major changes in the lives of students.

15. A vast number of respondents observed social partnership changes, primarily due to minimal interpersonal encounters with their families and acquaintances. This is close to recent results among Chinese students of deteriorating mental health condition and raised Internet search queries about suicidal thinking in the US. As these factors have known associations with depressive symptoms, the results on the effect of the pandemic on sleeping and eating patterns are also a cause for concern.

CONCLUSION

16. The psychology of university students correlated with COVID-19 was strong (anxiety, depression and stress), as per this report. Factors that raised the risk of depression included being female, staying at home, personal records, social services that are reasonably low. Causes that raised the risk of anxiety were not staying with their parents, corona virus in their family and lower socioeconomic status.

17. The rate of obtaining medical aid was already low in the case of public health crises, and university students with a precarious psychological condition turned increasingly to finding therapeutic treatment. Fear caused by the epidemic of COVID-19 is more likely than pain and terror to predict the psychological support-seeking behavior of university students, since it not only triggers a distress reaction, but also increases the desire of college students to seek assistance. College students with a high history of psychiatric service and low mental health status, on the other hand, are more likely to seek psychological support, which can be related to self-efficacy and future gains.

18. This research has important consequences for university counseling programs among acute, large-scale stress factors, such as an infectious disease outbreak, in the prevention, diagnosis, and care of mental health issues among students, and is one of the few findings on emotional well-being and psychological assistance taking effect among college students in the COVID-19 crisis. Since students not specifically affected by COVID-19 have reported large numbers of psychiatric problems associated with COVID-19 since the outbreak, university campuses should establish and introduce productive responsible for the activation to closely monitor the vulnerability of students to stressors and mental health status. In addition, anxiety is the main element that motivates college students to pursue clinical support.

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Appendix I

Semi structured interview questions

1. What is your age?
2. What is the University you are studying?
3. Did you had enough facilities at the home for studies in the pandemic situation?
4. Did you had an internet connection that enough to connect to the online lectures?
5. In the pandemic situation did you feel any kind of loneliness while at the home?
6. Did you had any difficulties in sleeping over night during the pandemic?
7. Did you had any difficulties in concentrating while you are in online lectures?
8. Did you feel in the pandemic you had increased in the stress level?
9. Do you have any counselling or other psychological support options available in your University?
10. How do you normally manage your stress/anxiety?
11. What do you propose to implement for undergraduate students' psychological wellbeing during this pandemic?