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**MENTAL HEALTH AND ONLINE SOCIALIZING DURING
PANDEMICS COVID-19**

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Abstract

This study aimed to discuss issues relating to mental health and online socializing during pandemics Covid-19. This aim was pursued using a systematic review of literature, which is a secondary data collection method. Secondary data collection method was selected due to the numerous availability of research articles that have been written on the topic. By reviewing different sources and comparing and contrasting findings, it becomes possible to take a definite position on the impact of the disease on mental health. Findings from the literature review showed that the effect of Covid-19 can lead to mental health issues of both the victims and the vulnerable. Stress and anxiety are some of the mental health issues. People have been advised to quarantine and isolate themselves by staying at home for some time. With online socializing available, people can be kept active, interacting with family and loved ones, and playing games. It was thus concluded that the reality of COVID-19 in impacting mental lives exists and so the need to take extra steps to deal with this aspect of the disease.

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Keywords: Coronavirus disease, COVID-19, Online socializing, Mental health problems



1. Introduction

From December 2019, the major health-related news trending across the globe is the spread of the coronavirus pandemic (Arabi et al., 2020). This respiratory infectious disease has caused much havoc to a higher percentage of the world's population. Almost every aspect of the economy has been significantly affected due to the severity of the pandemic. Apart from the lives of many loved ones that have been lost, many business operations have been brought to a halt or not accelerating as it used to be. The pandemic has left so many bad trails in the lives of many people and nations across the globe (Lima et al., 2020). Aside from the economic and social impact that the pandemic has caused, issues of mental health is a significant area that cannot be underestimated. The conditions associated with the epidemic, which have to be adhered to survive and stay safe, also raise mental health issues. People cannot freely move, associate with others, and transact business operations as previously used to be due to social distancing protocols (Tam et al., 2020). The essence of this study is to review the literature on mental health and online socializing amidst the Covid-19 pandemic era.

2. Search Methodology

As a literature review, secondary data collection method was used. The secondary data collection involved collecting data from existing studies pertaining to the research topic. To ensure that articles selected for the review were relevant to the study, a systematic search was performed using appropriate keywords and databases. Three main electronic databases were searched, which are CINAHL, MEDLINE and Science Direct. In order to set the right keywords relevant for the study, the PEO tool was used. This tool is the acronym for population and their problems, exposures and outcomes. The population and their problem was patients with COVID-19. The exposure was online socializing while the outcome was mental health. The components of the PEO tool and their synonym of words were used to create multiple keywords using the Boolean operator OR between keywords as depicted in the Table 01 below.

Table 1. The components of the PEO tool and their synonym of words

Search No.	Search Words	CINAHL	Science Direct	MEDLINE
S1	COVID-19*OR Coronavirus*OR Corona*OR Coronavirus disease*OR SARS-CoV-2*	1,270	1,369	2,839
S2	Online socializing* OR Digital socializing* OR Social media interaction*	3,997	5,252	3,301
S3	Mental health* OR Mental health problems* OR Mental issues*	15,421	13,933	12,736
S4	S1 AND S2 AND S3	310,765	264,952	303,766
S5	Study OR Finding*	134,058	193,432	153,493
S6	S4 AND S5	75,866	85,802	64,109

The table gives a breakdown of the number of initial search outcomes from the three databases using the keywords set. Because the outcomes were very many, an inclusion and exclusion criteria was set. For example all articles older than 5 years were excluded. Also, articles that were not complete but only abstracts were also excluded. Articles not originally published in English language were also excluded. Finally, primary studies were preferred over secondary studies. Meanwhile, both qualitative and quantitative studies were considered. With these criteria, the number of articles were reduced to 248, after which skimming and scanning was applied to select final 25 to be included in the literature review.

3. Mental health during Covid-19 Pandemic

Coronavirus started in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 after several diagnoses of pneumonia were recorded. Initially, the virus was linked to Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market. The infection was later diagnosed to have been caused by SARS-CoV-2 discovered via wholesale genome sequencing polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and bronchoalveolar lavage fluid culture from patients with the infection (Arabi et al., 2020). Patients with severe Covid-19 pneumonia are transferred to the Intensive Care Units. With the intensity and severity of the disease comes its direct impact on mental health as studied by various researchers. Mental health alludes to cognitive, social, and enthusiastic wellbeing. It is about how individuals think, feel, and carry on. Mental health can influence the everyday living, connections, and physical wellbeing (Scheid & Wright, 2017).

Factors in individuals' lives, relational associations, and physical variables can add to disturbances in mental health. It is based on the relationship between different variables of health outcomes and mental health that a link has always been drawn between COVID-19 and the state of mental health of patients. For example Zhang (2020) reports of a 75-year-old man in the ICU has a medical history of hypertension for ten years and diabetes for one year. After a series of tests, his temperature recorded 35.50C with 54 BPM. His blood pressure was 136/79mm Hg, with an oxygen saturation of 91%. Meanwhile, available data on the COVID situation shows that patients with comorbidities and older patients have higher risk of mortality (Xie et al., 2020). Once this patient described by Zhang (2020) identifies he has multiple risk factors for increased mortality, it can trigger unstable state of mental health for him.

Another aspect of the disease that can trigger mental health issues such as anxiety even for those not affected is the increased media reportage on the disease, particularly in terms of number of cases that are reported daily. More than 40,000 cases had been recorded, with more than 1,000 deaths that have been caused by a coronavirus in China as of February 10, 2020. Statistics proved that almost 15% of the victims had severe pneumonia, and about 6% of those who required noninvasive or invasive ventilatory support (Xie et al., 2020). The World Health Organization declared the outbreak of Covid-19 as an emergency of public health concern, which had a steady rate of transmission on January 30, 2020. As of now, no confirmed prevention and treatment have been produced. This makes the virus deadly to humanity (Zheng et al., 2020). The illness can be fatal in patients with underlying diseases, inflammatory indicators in blood, and secondary infections (Ruan et al., 2020). With news of this nature going on every day, it puts everyone at some danger of building a psychological well-being issue, regardless of their age, sex, salary, or ethnicity. In the U.S. and also other parts of the world, mental clutters one of the primary sources of handicap. Social

and money related conditions, natural components, and way of life decisions would be able to shape an individual's psychological well-being.

4. Online Socializing during COVID-19

While the term social distancing has been used as an intervention for controlling the spread of COVID-19, the reality is that social interaction that is done through healthy means such as online socializing is necessary to curbing and controlling symptoms of mental health issues in patients and health ones alike (Shorey et al., 2020). Keeping up and framing social associations online can shape people's time on the web, and is reliably positioned as exceptionally pleasant by youngsters. For some individuals, online connections can be a fundamental piece of their companionship gathering and their supportive network (Hamilton et al., 2020). A portion of these is content only, such as Facebook Chat or Google Hangouts. Skype takes into consideration video calls and is regularly utilized by experts for video-conferencing in situations where they cannot keep physical distance as a result of COVID-19. These stages can be used to stay aware of loved ones, direct business, or meet individuals (Shorey et al., 2020). Through forums, people have the opportunity to chat with anybody, generally constrained by intrigue or theme instead of social gatherings or area (Alzahrani, 2017).

Online socializing has been found to be effective in fostering psychological wellbeing necessary in minimizing chances of mental health issues setting off (Ruan et al., 2020). Taking care of psychological well-being can protect an individual's capacity to appreciate life. Doing this includes arriving at harmony between life activities, obligations, and endeavors to accomplish mental versatility. Conditions, such as stress, wretchedness, and nervousness, would be able to influence emotional wellness and upset an individual's daily schedule (Slade et al., 2017). An enormous extent of individuals with a mental wellness issue has more than each condition in turn. Note that excellent psychological health relies upon a fragile parity of components and that few parts of life and the world everywhere can cooperate to add to disarranges (Pilgrim, 2019). With modern approach to digitization, there are likewise chat rooms where individuals can meet. Walker (2017) however cautioned that the namelessness gives both wellbeing and hazard, as clients don't have a clue who they are conversing with, yet also, don't chance positive social repercussions while permitting them to explore different avenues regarding their self-articulation.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has had so many implications for individuals (Newby et al., 2020). Many people have lost their jobs and their loved ones. People are not able to meet and freely interact with others without adhering to social distancing protocols. In societies that were locked down to reduce the spread rate, people were stuck in their rooms for weeks and months without moving out. The Maslow Theory of Human Motivation mentions physiological needs, such as access to food, water, fresh air, and other necessities (Hale et al., 2019). The second need highlights security, which captures access to comfort and desire for order. The third express the desire for love and the state of belonging (Crandall et al., 2020). The conditions meted out to reduce the spread of Covid-19 threatens the full expression of the Maslow Theory of needs (Hagerty & Williams, 2020). The denial of these motivations due to lockdowns and social distancing protocols can cause mental health issues. People kept in isolation are denied the opportunity to

interact with family and friends until they have fully recovered. The advent of online socializing platforms has eased this burden since people can interact virtually through the available social media platforms (Bevin, 2020). Even though the online socializing is keeping people busy at home in releasing stress which can contribute to mental health, yet it comes with the problem of addiction. More extended periods of staying home due to Covid-19 and the technology-based activity has the danger of making participants find it difficult in readaptation to their standard life patterns after the pandemic has passed (King et al., 2020). This can lead to behavioral addictions, which can also be difficult to battle. People will find it challenging to switch from their activeness on online socializing and game playing to work and increase productivity (Kar et al., 2020). The study reviewed literature Coronavirus and its impact in the global world. It was realized that the pandemic has led to so many people developing mental health issues. Most of the problems are related to the loss of loved ones, jobs, and livelihoods. Lockdowns were introduced to minimize the spread of the virus, and people have been kept active with online socializing withstands the threat of addiction after the pandemic is over.

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