

Mental Health Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic in a Southern US State

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Brief Report

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a huge impact on how people and organisations function all around the world. In this cross-sectional registry-based investigation, the burdens of the pandemic, the incidence of mental health concerns, and risk factors for psychosocial morbidity among community residents in Arkansas were studied. The study took place at a period when the hospital was slowly reopening but infection rates were increasing. The study relied on validated screening instruments for depressive symptoms (PHQ-9), generalised anxiety (GAD-7), trauma-related symptoms (PCL-5), and alcohol consumption (AUDIT-C). A considerable number of participants reported increased symptoms for each of these outcomes. Separate multivariable analyses that accounted for a number of demographic and pandemic-related covariates found that people who reported more pandemic-related disruption in daily life, as well as those with a prior history of mental health concerns, were more likely to screen positive for depressive, anxiety, and trauma-related symptoms. The findings offer light on the issues that community members faced during the phased reopening, as well as laying the framework for future screening and intervention initiatives.

The coronavirus infection (COVID-19) has had a substantial influence on people's daily life all around the world since the World Health Organization and the US Department of Health and Human Services declared it a public health emergency in January 2020. The virus's high transmissibility, along with a scarcity of licenced vaccines and treatment alternatives, has resulted in a public health calamity. Communities have had to contend with a scarcity of viral testing resources, a loss in access to standard medical treatment, and frequently contradictory preventative health recommendations. Physical distance constraints have limited access to work and recreation. As a result of the startling economic repercussions, many people have been laid off or had their earnings reduced, and nearly everyone's daily routines have been interrupted. These significant changes could contribute to a range of mental difficulties, including social isolation, anxiety, uncertainty, and bereavement.

There have been urgent calls for a research into the possible mental health effects of the COVID-19 epidemic. Although research in this sector is rapidly progressing, little is known about public reaction in the United States. In the early aftermath of the outbreak, an initial wave of studies indicated heightened levels of self-reported anxiety, depressive symptoms, and distress among community residents in China, followed by Italy, Germany, Egypt, Hong Kong, and the United States. Earlier research on the mental health effects of the SARS coronavirus epidemic found comparable results, however the data came primarily from recovered patients rather than the broader public. A

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Received 04 January, 2022, Manuscript No. cmcr-22-53812; **Editor assigned:** 06 January, 2022, PreQC No. P-53812; **Reviewed:** 10 January, 2022, QC No. Q-53812; **Revised:** 15 January, 2022, Manuscript No. R-53812; **Published:** 21 January, 2022, DOI: 10.37421/2684-4915.2022.6.186

broader, well-developed literature has focused on psychological responses to different sorts of community-level disasters, with data indicating to persistent depression and trauma-related symptoms, sometimes in association with other difficulties such as anxiety, substance use, and general distress.

The extent to which these issues are linked to the emergence of the COVID-19 epidemic in the United States is uncertain, and more research is clearly required. Furthermore, few studies have focused specifically on the public's experience during periods of phased reopening of businesses and organisations. Such study is particularly important in areas where infection rates are rising and citizens are wrestling with the dilemma of increasing access and social involvement while also increasing danger. Infection rates with the SARS-CoV-2 virus and local government mitigation initiatives have varied dramatically over time in different geographic regions. The current study looked at community residents' mental health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in Arkansas using a registry-based cross-sectional analysis. Rural areas have been identified as having people of particular interest, albeit they have not yet been investigated in the United States.

We looked at a variety of clinically relevant psychosocial outcomes that could be damaged by a global traumatic event using validated self-report screening measures (e.g., heightened symptoms of depression, generalised anxiety, posttraumatic stress, and alcohol misuse). We also looked at a variety of demographic and environmental risk factors that could make psychological morbidity more likely. Specific situational factors such as perceived viral exposure or infection, food and financial insecurity, decreased access to regular medical people caring, greater daily life disturbance, more stringent social distancing, and diminished daily structure were expected to be linked to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder [1-5].

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How to cite this article: Ceilleux, Jennifer. "Mental Health Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic in a Southern US State." *Clin Med Case Rep* 6 (2022):186.