

# Women Are More Vulnerable to Psychological Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic

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The Coronavirus family are positive-sense, single-strand, and linear RNA viruses with a wide range of manifestations from mild respiratory symptoms such as common cold to severe respiratory distress and death and certain gastrointestinal symptoms (1). Some important members of Coronavirus family, causing the pandemic, are Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

COVID-19 emerged in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (2). It rapidly spread across the world, such that the World Health Organization (WHO) hailed it the pandemic of the century in March 11, 2020 (3). By July 4, 2020, about 10.5 million infected patients and around 500,000 deaths were reported worldwide (4). COVID-19 spreads either directly via respiratory droplets dispersed during talking, coughing, sneezing, or indirectly via the surfaces and objects contaminated by viral particles (5). Hence, social distancing, wearing masks, and using sanitizers are mentioned as the most effective methods for interrupting the cycle of COVID-19 transmission. Besides, most countries implemented lockdown in their communities for a while.

Epidemics impose a great distress on people. The most prevalent thought would involve the fear of contracting the disease, the possibility of death, or any devastating outcomes in the family members or acquaintances. In addition, the manifestations of COVID-19 have varied a lot since its emergence, worsening people's distress because they would consider any symptoms as COVID-19 infection until proven otherwise. Also, all the methods used for reducing the transmission of the virus would have significant psychological side effects on individuals. On the other hand, many citizens such as waiters and waitresses have lost their jobs whereas many others are at risk of being laid-off because the

economic hardship has made companies size down their business. These days, most people, regardless of their age group and educational level, have to use internet much more than before, which could be a source of distress for those who are not expert internet users. Schools have to change their educational method from the traditional format to an online one. This could be another source of distress as in developing countries, there are insufficient infrastructures while not all families could afford the costs of high-speed internet, smart phones, or tablets.

The newly emerged stressors have psychological impacts on people; however, women are more vulnerable to mental disorders, including depression, anxiety, or panic attack (6). While mental disorders have been reported to be more prevalent in women (7), having multiple responsibilities including being a mother, a daughter, a wife, and a sister and working outside the home has added to women's distress burden. Furthermore, longitudinal research has shown that post-trauma stress disorder (PTSD) has affected women more during COVID-19 epidemic (8).

All in all, governments should adopt a culture-adjusted method to diminish the psychological effects of COVID-19 on citizens, particularly women. Considering the pivotal role of women in the family, their mental health would affect both the mental and physical health of the family members, hence the communities.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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