

Understanding Stress and Burnout Among Mental Health Professionals in Singapore During COVID-19 Endemicity

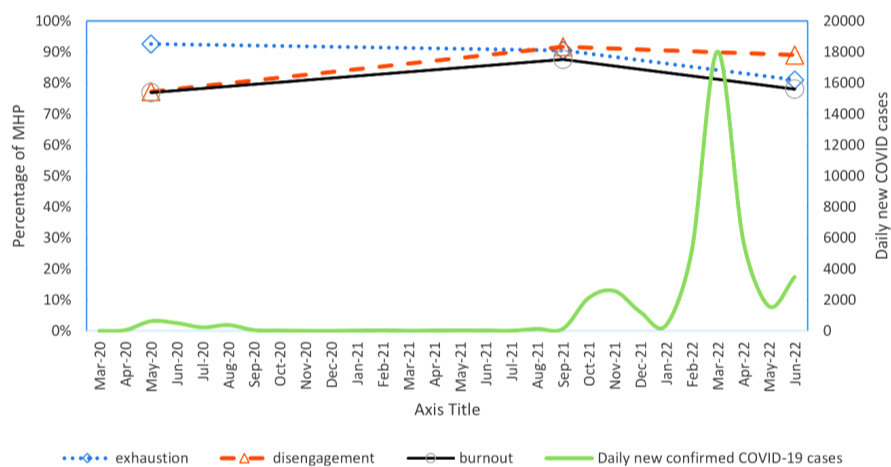
In a recent publication in PLoS One, researchers shed light on the critical issue of stress and burnout among Mental Health Professionals (MHP) in Singapore amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The study delves into the challenges faced by these professionals during the endemic phase of the pandemic.

Key Points:

1. Pandemic Impact: Even before COVID-19, MHP grappled with burnout, but the pandemic exacerbated these concerns. The study revealed high levels of stress and burnout among MHP during the pandemic years, with exhaustion and disengagement significantly affecting their well-being.

2. Transition to Endemicity: As Singapore transitioned into a state of COVID-19 endemicity, hopes were high for reduced stress levels among MHP. However, the study found that burnout rates remained high, suggesting persistent challenges.

Figure 1: Proportions of MHP meeting exhaustion, disengagement and burnout thresholds and daily new COVID cases



3. Contributing Factors: High clinical workload emerged as a major contributor to stress and burnout. Additionally, younger and less experienced MHP reported higher levels of burnout, indicating the need for targeted support for these groups.

4. Need for Support: While flexible working arrangements were identified as a key area for improvement, the study also highlighted the low utilization of support programs among MHP. This underscores the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of such programs.

5. Policy Recommendations: To address these challenges, policy makers and hospital management are urged to prioritize setting clear mental health targets and implement strategies such as manageable workloads, capacity building, and flexible work arrangements. Digital optimization and enhanced support services are also crucial.

In conclusion, the study highlights the urgent need to address stress and burnout among MHP, emphasizing the importance of holistic support and targeted interventions. By raising awareness and implementing evidence-based strategies, IMH can better support its MHP and enhance overall well-being in the workplace.

Reference:

Yang S, et al. Stress and burnout amongst mental health professionals in Singapore during Covid-19 endemicity. *PLoS One*. 2024.19(1):e0296798

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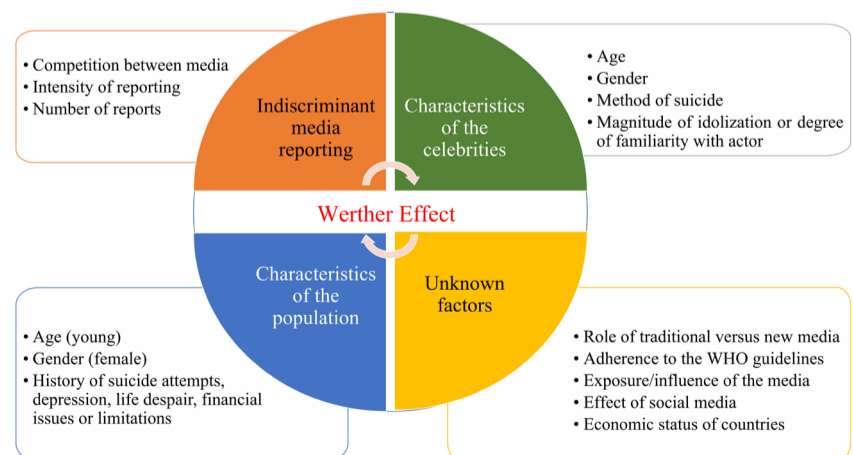
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Media Reporting and Suicide: A Copycat Crisis in Asia

The research division of the Institute of Mental Health conducted a systematic review on the impact of media reporting of suicides and subsequent copycat behaviour among the general public in Asia. The review evaluated the evidence on the association between media portrayals of suicides and copycat suicides or attempts, factors associated with copycat suicides, and any positive impacts of media reporting, such as increased help-seeking or coping strategies.

The study team screened and analyzed articles in English and Chinese from 8 databases. Among the 32 included studies that reported media reporting of suicide as an exposure, regardless of various factors such as country, celebrity status, or media type, there was consistent evidence showing an increase in copycat suicides and attempts after media reports of suicides. Vulnerability to the negative impact was higher in females, younger age groups, and individuals who shared similar characteristics as the celebrity (gender and age). Additionally, reporting the method of suicide increased suicides by the same method among the public. The review underscores the strong influence of media reporting on suicide behaviour in Asia, highlighting the urgent need for responsible reporting practices to curb detrimental effects, particularly among vulnerable groups. The review calls for a collaborative effort by policymakers, media professionals, community

services, and health systems to create awareness among the general public and media professionals, identify risk groups, and encourage early help-seeking, especially among those at risk of copycat effects. The article has been published in the *Annals, Academy of Medicine Singapore* (Asharani et al., 2024, The impact of media reporting of suicides on subsequent suicides in Asia: A systematic review, 53(3), <https://doi.org/10.47102/annals-acadmedsg.2023237>).



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