

Review of Psychological and Coping Responses Towards Emerging Infectious Disease Outbreaks: Considerations for COVID-19

COMMON PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSES

Anxiety / Fears

Depression

Anger

Guilt

Grief & loss

Posttraumatic stress

Stigmatization

Empowerment & compassion

COMMON COPING STRATEGIES

Problem-focused coping

Seeking social support

Avoidance

Positive appraisal of the situation

Emerging infectious disease outbreaks often have adverse psychological consequences for the well-being of the general population, including the survivors as well as their caregivers. Few studies have compared the extent of these adverse consequences and the coping responses people have employed across various infectious disease outbreaks.

A better understanding of such data would be helpful in anticipating the psychological needs of the general population, and in planning for interventions or allocation of resources, particularly in the context of the present COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, our study aimed to conduct a narrative synthesis of the extant literature regarding the combined psychological responses and coping methods used by the general population in past infectious disease outbreaks. Published literature over the last two decades was included in our review, and only papers exploring both psychological responses and coping strategies within infectious disease outbreaks were selected for consideration.

We identified a total of 144 papers from the initial search, of which 24 were eventually selected for inclusion in the review. There were 18 studies pertaining to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic, 4 studies on the Ebola epidemic, and 2 studies on the H1N1 outbreak. In light of the current pandemic, our results suggest that there is a need to focus on the individual in the context of the larger social environment by raising awareness of the range of possible psychological responses, providing access to psychological help, educating and encouraging self-care, empowering support groups, and maintaining sustained engagement with the public by providing updated and reliable information about the outbreak.

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Understanding the relationships between mental disorders, self-reported health outcomes and positive mental health: findings from a national survey

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WHAT WE STUDIED:

Using data from the Singapore Mental Health Study 2016, this study,

- Estimated the level of positive mental health among those with and without lifetime mental disorders (mood, anxiety and/or alcohol use disorders)
- Assessed the relationships between mental disorders, health outcomes (self-rated overall health, quality of life) and positive mental health
- Investigated the mediating role of positive mental health (whether positive mental health levels change the adverse impact of mental disorders on health outcomes)

WHAT WE FOUND:

- **Expected finding:** Compared to the adult general population, individuals with depressive, bipolar, generalised anxiety, obsessive compulsive or alcohol use disorders have lower positive mental health and quality of life.
- **Novelty of this research:** Positive mental health comprised six subcomponents (general coping, emotional support, spirituality, internal personal skills, personal growth and autonomy and global affect), that were best suited for multi-ethnic Asians.
- **Public health significance of the findings:** Individuals' positive mental health could reduce the adverse association between mental conditions and their quality of life. There is value in pursuing positive mental health dialogues and promotion among service users.

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