MENTAL WELLBEING OF THAI PEOPLE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Submission: 10 April 2021

Revised: 04 May 2021

Accepted: 27 May 2021

Peer-review under responsibility of 5th ASIA International Multidisciplinary Conference 2021 (Online)
Scientific Committee

<http://connectingasia.org/scientific-committee/>

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Office # 6, First Floor, A & K Plaza, Near D Watson, F-10 Markaz, Islamabad, Pakistan,

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ABSTRACT

The effect of CO19 has influenced people mental well-being caused by the pandemic, economic, social, and lifestyle changes. Several studies examined the link between CO19 and mental health, both with the virus and non-infectious causes. This study focuses on how COVID-19 affect Thai people mental well-being by which the respondents are Thai people of different ages and demographics. A questionnaire survey is employed to collect information. The number of usable sample of this study is 644 respondents. This study investigated trends in psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, stress, depression, and the CO19 pandemic. In addition, the study also tries to identify the course of mental disorders of the respondents. We found that lifestyle issues, job shifts, and financial problems have contributed to a rise in the respondents 'mental health. Lifestyle has a negative correlation to the degree of stress with mental illness, while education also has a significant impact on the mental wellbeing of the respondents.

Keywords: *Mental-Wellbeing, Mental Disorders, Mental Impact, Psychological Impact, COVID-19*

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

1. The post-COVID-19 mental conditions was hypothesized to increase and statistically different from that of prior COVID-19. This alternative hypothesis is accepted. The post-COVID-19 mental conditions were worsened in every sickness measured.
2. Thai people got anxious the most after the outbreak of COVID-19 in February 2020.
3. Younger age has a negative correlation to the increase of mental sickness. The changes of lifestyle that now become new normal, financial impact caused by COVID-19, and work pattern are key main factors that influenced the rise of mental sickness of Thai respondents.

Research Objectives

1. To compare the mental well-being conditions caused by COVID-19 of Thai respondents of the time prior (before February 2020) and after Covid-19 (after February 2020)
2. To examine influencing factors that affect the mental well-being of Thai respondents.

Methodology

This study collects comprehensive data about the mental well-being of Thai respondents caused by the COVID-19 epidemic in Thailand. Thus, quantitative data are obtained via questionnaires. An online questionnaire is developed to gather responses to mental condition on COVID-19 and the causes of the mental unhealthiness, divided into four different impacts, namely education, financial, work, and lifestyle. Likert scales 1 to 5 are used in the questionnaire. Descriptive analysis and paired sample t-tests and multiple regression are employed in this study to prove the set hypotheses.

Results

This study explored the mental conditions of the respondents in seven different conditions – anxiety, panic, stress, depression, isolation, fear, worthlessness. We found that all of these conditions were worsened significantly after the pandemic statistically. The average mental score of all seven conditions prior to the COVID-19 was 2.12 (out of 5.0) and become 2.28 after the COVID-19 outbreak. Anxiety was the number one condition that illustrated the statistical difference ($t = -5.978$, $p\text{-value} < .001$). All conditions are statistically different when compared to the prior and after COVID-19.

When considered the factors that affect the mental well-being of the respondents, four factors – education, finance, work pattern and lifestyle changes, incorporate with age, gender and education were put into the multiple regression model. We found that the influencing factors are lifestyle changes, finance, and work pattern (all positive impact), together with age (negative impact). It means that these three factors have a high potential to cause mental well-being, in addition, younger age is negatively correlated to the increase of mental sickness. The regression model was developed ($\text{MENTL} = .251\text{LST} + .178\text{FIN} + .186\text{WK} - .075\text{AGE}$). This finding is also in line with [1][2] which stated that those with higher age tend to be better at coping with negative mental impacts.

Findings

Mental wellbeing as measured from the level of anxiety, panic, stress, depression, isolation, fear, worthlessness has increased statistically and significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic. Four main factors – education, finance, work pattern and lifestyle changes - together with age, gender and education level were examined the correlations with the level of the mental stage. Only three factors namely finance, work pattern and lifestyle changes and age have influenced the increase of mental well-being of Thai people after the outbreak of COVID-19. Thus, a negative correlation suggests a contrary relationship between the two variables, age and gender. Therefore, supports the result of research conducted by Kwong A, S. F., et al (2020), which reported escalation anxiety during the pandemic, especially in the young [3][4]. While the older ones had contrarily experienced less severe mental impact [5][6].

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Author's Biography

Miss Ratchanun Jaibun, is currently an undergraduate student at Rangsit International College, Rangsit University. She is now studying in International Business program. During the study, she has studied diligently and participated in university activities. Recently, she won the second runner up of the SEASAC South-East Asia Sales Competition which arranged under the Erasmus plus program of the European Union.

Assistant Prof. Kanitsorn Terdpaopong, Ph.D., served as International Program Director at Rangsit University, Thailand. She has received grants from the Thai Research Fund, The Office of Higher Education Commission and in 2018 she was awarded an Australian Endeavour Executive Fellowship from the Australian Government, Department of Education and Training; and awarded Taiwan Fellowship from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China.

Mrs. Kanitha Chawananon, is a retired professional nurse from Nan Hospital, Thailand. She worked as a professional nurse at Nan Hospital for almost 30 years and earned medical experiences in orthopedic, pediatric, medicine departments and emergency room. The final position at the hospital was a nurse director of the orthopedic. Now, she dedicated herself to teaching undergraduate students in areas related to medical science.