



General public

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the mental health of individuals worldwide, including the young population. In Oman, where young people were confined to their homes and residences, mental health issues escalated over time. Numerous studies and research efforts were conducted to understand the specific effects of COVID-19 on young people's mental health. Here are some key findings from these studies.

Prevalence and predictors of depression, anxiety and stress among youth at the time of COVID-19: an online cross-sectional multicounty study (2020)

This study reported that the overall prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress among youth was 57%, 40.5% and 38.1%, respectively, with no significant variations between countries.

Significant predictors of stress, anxiety and depression included being female, having contact with a friend or family member with mental illness, undergoing a 14-day quarantine and using the internet.

Predictors of psychological distress among the public in Oman amid coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic: a cross-sectional analytical study

This study revealed that around 30% of women and girls experienced psychological distress. Independent predictors of psychological distress included being female, facing financial instability, receiving treatment for mental illness and engaging in self-medication to cope with stress.

The impact of COVID-19 on the private higher education system and students in Oman (2021)

This study highlighted that student satisfaction with online education did not exceed 50%. It also noted that exams were replaced by extra coursework or assessment based on existing coursework without prior announcement. Financial implications caused by the pandemic led to concerns among 40% of students regarding the non-payment of tuition fees.

Sleep quality among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic

This study found that 28.9% of respondents experienced moderate to severe stress, while 53% reported depression and 40% reported sleep disturbances.

The mental health of female physicians and nurses in Oman during the COVID-19 pandemic

This study revealed that doctors and nurses involved in the care of COVID-19 patients experienced higher levels of stress compared to those not directly involved. Approximately 45.3% of participants scored 50% or less on the well-being scale.

The mental health of healthcare workers in Oman during the COVID-19 pandemic

This study indicated that stress levels were high among women and young healthcare workers. Overall, mental health and well-being were poorer among women and young healthcare workers compared to their male and more experienced counterparts. The study emphasized the need to examine the psychological and social well-being of healthcare workers in other Arab countries.

Factors associated with mental health outcomes across healthcare settings in Oman

during COVID-19: frontline versus non-frontline healthcare workers

In this study, a significant number of healthcare workers experienced mental health issues. Among the participants, 32.3% reported symptoms of depression, 34.1% experienced anxiety, 23.8% faced stress and 18.5% suffered from insomnia. The study highlighted a notable distinction in the impact on mental well-being between frontline and non-frontline healthcare workers. Frontline workers were 1.5 times more likely to report anxiety, stress and insomnia compared to their non-frontline counterparts. However, there were no significant differences in the prevalence of depression between the two groups.

Service users and their family members

During the pandemic, several measures were implemented to ensure the provision of essential healthcare services and support.

Outpatient department services were reduced in all health facilities, with a focus on managing emergencies and unstable conditions.

Most polyclinics established hotlines for patients to seek assistance and make inquiries.

Patients were advised to contact healthcare facilities via WhatsApp or phone to ensure the availability of medication.

Monthly medications and new follow-up appointments were provided to patients.

Service providers in health and social care

To support the healthcare providers during the pandemic, several polyclinics established hotlines for service providers to reach out if needed.

Challenges

Oman faced challenges in addressing mental health issues during the pandemic.

Patients exhibited reluctance to attend clinics, leading to a significant increase in mental health relapses, substance abuse and related behaviours.

Concerns about contracting the virus contributed to decreased attendance at chronic disease clinics, including psychiatric clinics.

The pandemic resulted in poor medication adherence and sudden lifestyle changes, further exacerbating mental health symptom relapses, substance abuse and related aggressive and violent behaviours.

Delivering mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS) and ensuring continuity

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, innovative solutions were implemented to ensure the delivery of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services in Oman.

Adjustments were made to mental health services as part of the COVID-19 response, including reducing outpatient department services in most health facilities.

Services were re-arranged to accommodate emergency cases and provide close follow-up for stability.

Routine cases were provided with a longer regular supply of psychiatric medications.

Psychiatric clinics shared their contact details with the community for consultations in case of need.

Hotline numbers were established for healthcare providers to seek support and arrange clinic

visits for additional assistance.

Phone consultations were provided for healthcare providers managing patients in institutional quarantine, as well as for patients in institutional quarantine.

In terms of psychological support, several initiatives were undertaken.

Educational sessions on COVID-19 and its impact on well-being were conducted by various governorates for the general public and healthcare providers, utilizing programmes like Zoom.

Collaborative efforts involving governorates, private clinics and community psychological teams led to the development of hotline services and the creation of awareness messages and short videos in Arabic, English, Urdu and French languages, targeted at the public and healthcare providers.

The "Pause. Breathe. Choose" campaign was launched in Oman to promote mental health and well-being among all groups, with an initial focus on healthcare providers.

Instructions and recommendations for physical and mental well-being during institutional quarantine/isolation were provided.

A psychological team called Youth Psychology developed a website with chat facilities, Q&A pages and a list of psychological support counselling centers. This initiative, called "Tatamaan" aimed to provide accessible mental health support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lessons learnt

The experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in Oman highlighted several valuable lessons.

There is a need to develop guidelines that ensure the continuity of care during periods of unrest, crisis and emergencies.

Reaching out to the public through various media channels to provide essential guidance on coping during crises is of utmost importance.

Rapid assessments of psychiatric clinics should be conducted to evaluate the impact of reorienting services on patients.

The positive response to hotline services should be considered for wider implementation.

Utilizing virtual technology for educational purposes, training and raising awareness about coping strategies during and after crises can be highly effective.

References

[Factors associated with mental health outcomes across healthcare settings in Oman during COVID-19: frontline versus non-frontline healthcare workers](#)

[Ministry of Health Oman](#)

[Ministry of Health Oman \(Twitter\)](#)

[Predictors of psychological distress among the public in Oman amid coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic: a cross-sectional analytical study](#)

[Prevalence and predictors of depression, anxiety and stress among youth at the time of COVID-19: an online cross-sectional multicounty study \(2020\)](#)

[Sleep quality among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[Tatamaan \(تاتامان\)](#)

[The impact of COVID-19 on the private higher education system and students in Oman 2021](#)

[The mental health of female physicians and nurses in Oman during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[The mental health of healthcare workers in Oman during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

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