



Evaluation of Current Mental Health Problems during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia

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Dear Editor,

It is undeniable that many things have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, starting with the economy, tourism, manufacturing, social services, transportation, food, and health. One of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, apart from physical illness, is mental health problems. In the early stages of the pandemic, studies on the mental health impacts in Indonesia showed a high prevalence of anxiety, depression, worried, fatigue, sleep problem, and other psychological symptoms.¹⁻³ Several factors are currently triggering mental health problems during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia.

Lockdown and quarantine policies reduce COVID-19 cases by keeping a distance, avoiding crowds, and having minimal contact with other people.⁴ However, continuous lockdown and quarantine will be a misery, leading to stress, anxiety, panic, boredom, and depression, as well as suicidal thoughts and attempts.⁵ Concurrency has increased national-subnational tensions, compromising effective response in the early stages of the crisis. The tension arose as a result of the national government's lengthy delay in responding to the crisis, which caused subnational governments to respond inconsistently.⁶ Therefore, people should start enjoying the self-quarantine or lockdown period by doing useful things while at home, such as pursuing hobbies, spending quality time with family, working from home, and adapting to existing conditions.

Stigma in the community towards health professionals is another factor causing mental health problems. It is assumed that they transmit the virus from hospitals to home.^{7,8} Because of this, health professionals experience homelessness, insecurity, and a lack of appreciation, which can lead to stress, sadness, and despair. Therefore, people need to be kind to healthcare professionals who are leading the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and provide them with encouragement and positive support while treating patients either directly or indirectly. Support from family and colleagues helps the nurse

deal with the social stigma.⁹ Nonetheless, nurses adhere to the principles of gratitude and carry out professional responsibilities in patient care. Nurses should be given psychological support and be prepared for disasters to provide excellent health care and reduce negative mental health outcomes.

Overexposure to COVID-19 news and false information from unreliable sources may worsen mental health issues, with increased exposure being associated with a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression.^{2,10} People may respond to COVID-19 news and false information by feeling that they have COVID-19 symptoms or by self-diagnosis; even this can happen in people with psychosomatic disorder who have the same symptoms. There was a high prevalence of mental health problems, which was associated with frequent social media exposure.¹¹ Therefore, people still need to filter the information they receive to ensure that it is accurate, true, and balanced. In addition, the government should pay more attention to mental health issues, particularly depression and anxiety, in the general population and combat "infodemics" during public health emergencies.

Paranoia related to the overall effect of the pandemic and the possibility of being exposed to or infected with the COVID-19 virus, even when following all sanitation and social distancing precautions, can also create mental problems.^{3,12} Paranoia leads to undesirable behaviors such as panic buying, individualism, haste, and impatience that can cause discomfort to others and trigger stress.¹³ Dealing with the paranoia of various strata of society, the government, health care professionals, and other stakeholders should develop psychosocial crisis prevention and intervention models as soon as possible.¹⁴ In addition, people should be calm, think positively, and think clearly when facing the current health crisis so that they can meet all their needs.

Complicated grief related to the COVID-19 pandemic can also affect mental health. It is anticipated that prolonged or complicated grief would increase during

the pandemic.^{15,16} Abnormal grief may also lead to psychopathologies including severe depression and anxiety disorder as well as low quality of life. Therefore, people should know the limits of grieving and be resilient to complicated grief. Male parents have greater resilience than female parents, and parents with daughters are tougher than parents with sons.¹⁶ Furthermore, to anticipate the potential threat of COVID-19 and the threat of future health pandemics, it is critical to strengthen socio-economic and creative learning settings, in addition to not ignoring the real impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on health globally, so that everything does not become a threat in the future.

In Indonesia, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental effect on mental health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian government's policies follow international guidelines such as maintaining social distancing, avoiding mass crowds, wearing masks, home quarantine, and so on.¹⁷ However, many people may experience feelings of anxiety, stress, and depression because of the strict policies applied. Strict policies cause people to become disobedient and experience psychological pressure as a result of being forced to obey applicable regulations. Lessons learned from previous pandemics, such as SARS, have shown that regular telephone counseling sessions, healthy family contact, pertinent and updated information, caring for general medical and psychological needs, and respect are all key aspects of mental health care.^{18,19} This provides sensitivity and response to the earlier detection of mental health care problems and the planning of suitable interventions, especially in vulnerable groups.

Through this letter, in your reputable journal, the author would like to encourage people who are still struggling at this time to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and maintain mental health. For further research, it is expected that the *Epidemiology and Health System Journal* will look at the situation and select articles related to current mental health problems during the COVID-19 pandemic, including mental health management, risk management, government management, impact management, and so on, which can help respond to the current situation regarding mental health in the COVID-19 pandemic.

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