

Editorial

Psychological Distress among Sri Lankans in the COVID-19 Pandemic situation

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The COVID-19 is a new form of coronavirus and its outbreak has recognized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) after it was detected initially in Wuhan, China and it has been spread all over the world by now. In Sri Lanka, the first person who was identified as positive for COVID-19 was a Chinese tourist lady, it was in late January 2020. The first Sri Lankan person identified positive for COVID19 was in early February 2020. By now, there are around 1700 people has identified as positive for COVID-19 and 11 deaths were reported by the end of June 2020. This article focuses on the mental health wellbeing to assess the frequency of stress, depression, and anxiety among the Sri Lankan public during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The application of isolation or quarantine rules and regulations in Sri Lanka has created many issues in peoples' day-to-day living, mainly for their occupation and social relationships. Psychological problems such as stress, anxiety, and depression are significant among other socio-economic, and political issues. Psychological distress is an uncomfortable objective state of depression and anxiety with a physical and mental indication of psychological conditions that can be inspected by psychosocial and behavioural symptoms related to anxiety and depression (Bessaha, 2017). Psychological distress is often considered as the mental suffering that a person is experiencing from an actual or perceived physical or psychological pressure. The main indication of psychological distress is the responses of a person to psychological issues to cope with the situation and reduce

the negative impact on their social and family life, as well as their overall wellbeing. These psychological distresses affected to thousands of lives during the COVID-19 Outbreak without any boundaries (Park & Park, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered several significant hazards to individuals' physically as well as mental health wellbeing. This novel challenge has created many unprecedented issues in social life (WHO, 2020). Exploring the frequency and harshness of the current psychological health problems due to the COVID-19 pandemic on the society is required to create a solid basis for implementing appropriate mental health involvements to survive in fast changing life routines successfully. Coronaviruses can be transmitted from animals to humans. Since the COVID19 outbreak is new to the world, there is no rigorous analysis available. However, the on-going research findings could not succeed to identify a successful medicine or a treatment to cure COVID-19 as it found in various forms, and also affects to human in various ways. As of April 2020, COVID-19 has blown-out to several countries of Asia and the Middle East including Japan, South Korea, Iran, Singapore, the USA and Europe, including Italy, Spain and the UK. The Italian Government locked down the whole country in March 2020 to control the spread, so people had stayed at home. Even if COVID-19 has been fast-moving seriously, the mortality rate tends to be smaller than other coronaviruses such as SARS (Hamzelou, 2020). The old aged people and other people those who are having other illness conditions are more vulnerable.

People were asked to keep social distance and limit their daily routines and activities, and to Stay at Home. Almost all countries have applied different isolation strategies to stop the pandemic outbreak until a vaccine or drug is discovered. These isolation strategies involve home isolation, social isolation, closing down schools and educational institutions such as universities, the cancellation of meetings, events, seminars, and conferences and travel restrictions (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020). However, due to this 'social distance' the society is facing lots of mental health-related issues. It is needed to investigate on the socio-economic, political, and psychological issues that well-handled during the pandemic outbreak (Kaya, 2020). The COVID-19 arise our concern on the necessity of treatments and

examine about psychological issues faced by individuals in the society. The COVID-19 pandemic has a significant psychological influence on grass root to top ladder of the social hierarchy. Therefore, the patients who are reported as positive or suspected of having COVID –19, as well as household members of their families face numerous psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, stress, panic disorders, isolation, frustration, and stigma etc. (Brooks, Webster, Smith, Woodland, & Wessely, 2020).

Mainly, ageing people, children, and women are more vulnerable in relations to mental health issues. Hence, they should be given more care and consideration in this situation. In Sri Lankan context, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, people are reluctant to receive psychological support due to the social stigma of mental health issues. Therefore, positive attitudes towards receiving mental health support and access to mental health services need to be enhanced to cope with current COVID-19 pandemic.

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