

RESEARCH ARTICLE

COVID-19 AND MENTAL HEALTH POLICY IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This article reviews the mental health policy in Indonesia during the COVID 19 pandemic. Cases of mental health problems have been increased significantly in Indonesia during this pandemic situation. COVID 19 provides a serious threat to the physical and mental health, but the Government is mainly focused on physical wellbeing rather than mental wellbeing. In this activity, the authors define different kinds of mental health problems mainly caused due to COVID 19 pandemic situation. People also isolate themselves from the other in this pandemic situation, so they are often feeling lonely and it causes psychological illness to most people. The victims of mental health problem often experience lack of confidence, disturbances in sleeping, lack of essential energy etc. The study also shows different methods and ways to collect the details of the disease and the guidelines to stay safe. Different mental health problems like anxiety, depression, and trauma are experienced by most Indonesian during this pandemic situation. In response to this problem, the government launches “Sejiwa service” to deal with psychological threat to any community. Government also launches a guideline for mental and psychological health. The government also involves in the process to alert a specific village how to deal with the mental and physical health problems independently. Thus, this paper will define the current picture of mental health problems in Indonesia due to the COVID 19 pandemic and how the government should react to prevent and overcome these mental health problems. *ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 22 (1): February 2021: 1-12*

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Introduction

Covid-19 is transmitted through human-to-human interaction thus after the outbreak of Covid-19 it became necessary to implement a worldwide restriction of travel as well as the interaction between humans for containing transmission of the virus. This virus was first transmitted in Wuhan of China from the meat market. It has been reported that viruses first transmitted to the human body through the meat of wild animals for seafood. At first, this virus reflected syndrome of the common cold however it resulted in acute health issues such as respiratory tract issues as well as damages in the heart that led to the death of numerous people. Soon this situation turned into a national emergency and the government of China imposed a

lockdown. However, the transmission rate of this virus was rapid and international travel before the implementation of the lockdown. After this national health emergency or epidemic of coronavirus took the form of pandemic World Health Organization (WHO) as well as worldwide all countries-imposed lockdown and social interaction and travel was put to halt. As social interaction, as well as travel, help was put on restriction people, suffered from immense loneliness as well as stress during this period. This prolonged lockdown has influenced socio-economic changes in people lives many people were job losses many people became uncertain about their career, family and future.

During the pandemic outbreak, the national government provides less importance to the mental health condition of the people against the infection rate of the disease. The restriction was put in socialisation activities of people as well as all of the other facilities except the essential commodities were put on halt for an uncertain period. This lockdown resulted in a dramatic fall in GDP as well as job loss and rapid changes in the socio-economic environment were significantly witnessed in middle-income countries. In such countries, suicide rates were also high and people were more addicted to opioids. After intuition of lockdown in 2020 intake of opioid per week increased up to 5000 from 2000 [1]. At the same time, emergency cases associated with changes in mental health increased up to 4500 from 3500. This situation highlights the necessity of implementing mental health policies for ensuring the wellbeing of people as mental health issues and minute changes in mental health conditions of people are needed to be identified for avoiding loss of life associated with sudden changes in the socio-economic environment of the country. Countries such as Indonesia have a high burden of mental health issues and covid-19 has further increased the burden by at least 10%. In the year 2018 Indonesia psychiatric association (PDSKJI) conducted a mental health assessment survey which reflected that approximately 9 million Indonesian citizens suffer from mental health disorders and 400,000 people have schizophrenia. In the year US-based organization Human rights watch surveyed in Indonesia and it has been identified that Indonesia suffers from a shortage of licenced psychiatrists and there is an average of only one psychiatrist per 300,000 to 400,000 people [2].

Another issue associated with this lock-down and excessive increase of mental health issues was the disruption in clinical availability of mental health services. As per the recent survey by

WHO, it has been identified that mental service providing facilities in 93% of countries of the world was disrupted in this period. The Government of Indonesia launched a public mental health counselling program in April of 2019 for dealing with sudden changes in mental health conditions of Indonesia people [3]. This service aimed to ensure the mental wellbeing of Covid-19 patients and increase in anxiousness of the public.

Methods

In this respective research to critically evaluate the efficiency of mental health of the policy of Indonesia during the time of the covid-19 outbreak, secondary research has been considered. Secondary qualitative research has been considered in this research paper for identifying the efficiency of the mental health policy during the covid-19 outbreak. To identify the efficiency of the mental health policy of Indonesia government for managing mental health issues in this country deductive research approach has been considered. In deductive research approach research activities developed as per proper logic and theories. As secondary research has been considered, research activities solely depend on the development of themes based on research objectives which help to identify information to meet objectives. As suggested by Tuffour advantages of deductive research approach include the possibility of explaining the causal relationship between concept and variables associated with the research topic [4]. It allows evaluating the research variables as well as factors associated with research phenomena qualitatively [5].

Consideration of deductive research approach has led to developing themes and access to secondary sources of energy for answering the objectives meeting research aims in this research. This respective research to evaluate the mental health policy of Indonesia in terms of mental health wellbeing of people of Indonesia,

secondary qualitative research method has been considered. Positivism research philosophy has been considered in this research. As suggested by Panhwar et al. advantages of positivism research philosophy allow conducting empirical examination based on research variables and it allows setting hypotheses based on variables [6]. On the other hand, Antwi & Hamza that consideration of positivism research philosophy helps to evaluate the relationship between research phenomena and scientifically thorough empirical evidence [7]. In this research to evaluate the efficiency of mental health policy in Indonesia positivism research philosophy has helped to identify consideration of particle information for implementing changes in policies to ensure the psychological wellbeing of people during covid-19.

Secondary qualitative research strategy has been followed in this research to identify the factors that have included changes in mental health policy of Indonesia for supporting the psychological wellbeing of people during covid-19. As mentioned by Johnston secondary research processes on the data collected by previous research based on similar topics as well as helps to incorporate current and reliable information in the research process [8]. Consideration of secondary research processes leads to the development of concepts based on the background of the study for further progressing the research based on the background concepts. As suggested by Rahman secondary research processes focus on the collection of information from secondary sources as well as evaluation of secondary information based on themes [9]. In this respective research similar process has been considered in which information has been collected from various secondary sources such as journal articles as well as online articles. Based on the collected information objectives have been evaluated to meet the aim of the research paper. The secondary research process has helped to

incorporate statistical information regarding increased mental health issues during COVID-19 and efficiency of the government activities for managing such issues based on mental health processes.

Literature Review

Mental Health Problems

In the scenario the Commission IX of the People Representative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) will need to give support and efforts about the prevention, managing and implementation of the following up of the several health issues due to the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic [10]. At the ending part of July 2020, the patient of COVID 19 in the destination of Surabaya Haji General Hospital was admitted with the prominent symptoms of the disease. He has gone through several swab tests to prove the symptoms of the disease and get the ready treatment on spot.

The patient showed severe mental problems and according to the director of the WHO, department has warned regarding the increased possibilities of mental illness down the time. COVID 19 has changed the scenario completely. In most cases, the government will be prioritizing the issue giving more attention to the problem of COVID 19 and mental illness in specific. In Indonesia, there is the COVID 19 Task Force and the report shows that the Pandemic has resulted in case of 80% psychological problems with the associated and the unsolved issues in specific.

Nowadays, the Government must impart better concern in the solving of the mental health problems in Indonesia at the time of COVID 19 pandemic. A mental health survey was conducted through the method of online self-examination and things are possible with the help of Association of Indonesian Mental Medicines Specialists or PDSKJI [11]. A population of 1552 respondents reacted to the situation and most of them migrated

from West Java. They also came from other places like DKI Jakarta, Central Java and East Java. Things started from the time of 23rd April 2020.

The kind of survey will show that around 63% of the respondents will experience symptoms of anxiety and about 66% of the respondents experienced symptoms of depression in specific. The patients suffered from irritability and they failed to feel calm and relaxed [12]. There were more things experienced by the victims and these are things like sleep disturbance, lack of confidence, and feeling of fatigue and lack of essential energy. With acute mental problem the inhabitants of Indonesia suffered from lack of interest and more than 80% of the population suffered from post-traumatic psychological stress. The main reason leading to mental health an issue was the unpleasant circumstances due to the sudden break of the pandemic.

The most prominent symptom of psychological illness at the time of COVID 19 is the feeling of loneliness and dejection. People have now become more vigilant and cautious. However, further examinations will prove that uncanny situations at the time have forced people into the kind of dilemma and now things have become difficult for them to escape the situation and get rid of the uncertainty at the earliest. Thinking about death and desolation has made people behave abnormally and they are not able to decide how to combat the problem with complete potential.

Mental Health Policy in Indonesia

A part from the clear burden of the pandemic which is prominent like a physiological disease the attack has caused uncertainty and has altered the daily and the routine of innumerable people in various parts of Indonesia. The condition has helped trigger prominent psychological issues and rest of the adverse consequences [13]. This has created the kind of economic

crisis leading to extreme social isolation. People are destined to maintain social distancing and there is less regular interaction among the Indonesian inhabitants. Isolated mind and existence have caused immense pressure in the lives of people. The Indonesians tend to lose the kind of usual flexibility in life.

The pandemic situation is sure to have a lasting effect on the lives of common people. Moreover, people are now all the time worrying about when they might fall sick. Moreover, it is not easy to know how long the pandemic will extend. Here comes the Indonesian COVID policy to help people enjoy the sort of happy and stress-free existence. People are always thinking that what lasts in future and things are taking shape of the kind of mental crisis. In addition to this excess information and even miscommunication will contribute to matters of collective thoughts and expressions going out of control with time.

In consequence, the policymakers in Indonesia should be considering the groups that are aptly vulnerable mainly because of the COVID impact. The policymakers will also take into account those who have recently lost their jobs because of the fiscal slowing down and also the healthcare candidates who have been a section of the kind of pandemic response in specific [14]. There have been both the direct and the indirect impacts of the pandemic and this can help exacerbate the level of mental health problems down the time.

The Indonesian policymakers have put an effort to help with the kind of psychological health resources to the unemployed sections at the time and even before the crisis period. The large and the notable Islamic Organizations such as Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) and even Muhammadiyah are playing a pivotal role in making strong the mental health status of the individuals largely utilized by the policymakers in specific. These policymakers have an extensive reach and

the social capital in various communities and this even includes the remote hinterlands in the Indonesian destination. The policy-making hub holds the list of followers and members and they have the best legitimacy in the eyes of common men.

Irrespective of the fact, what the government decides to do COVID 19 acts as an option in case of the Indonesian policymakers to have the close understanding of the kind of intersection in matters of the mental and physiological status and now things are handled all at the same time. In the case, government will take the chance by taking the individual initiative in strengthening the kind of health mechanism in Indonesia [15]. There are various COVID policies in Indonesia these days to help protect the health and interest of the general public order.

Mental Health Trauma

In the course, both the individual and the collective responses should be considered in lessening the harm at the time of the coronavirus pandemic. In the case, the health care personnel or the HCP will help demonstrate the closer contact with the ailment and the patients are sure to experience and encounter a higher risk of various psychological and infectious problems in specific. Here is the literature to help explore the anxious and depressive disorders among the health care candidates with a higher rate of psychological trauma. It is the sort of cross-sectional study making use of the secondary data in case of the outlined assessment and things were conducted after one month of the COVID 19 pandemic. In the case, there have been innumerable respondents of all the twenty-one provinces of Indonesia [16]. Data was collected based on anxiety and depression and even the burnout symptoms were first transferred using the sort of Rasch model and then categorizing things accordingly. In the case, direct data from HCP as part of the higher risk group and even from the

section of the lesser risk group was successfully explored and analysed.

As part of the higher HCP percentage in experiencing the kind of depressive feelings are more prominent in case of the higher risk group. A public announcement was made by the Indonesian government regarding the first two cases of COVID 19 that happened on 2nd March 2020. After ten days the status was increased by WHO and it was seen that the disease was fast spreading and infecting people leading to immense mental trauma. In Indonesia, the total number of people affected by COVID 19 was around 12,438 as of 6th May 2020.

By September 2020 more than 184 HCP died due to the spread and attack of the COVID pandemic. Here HCP was demonstrating a close contact with the victim of COVID. Extensive study will show that due to the work demand and lacks of social support there has been an increased risk of depression in Indonesia and with greater incidents of job burnout more people have been suffering as consequence [17]. The nurses and the doctors in Indonesia are at high risk in terms of emotional exhaustion and severe infection due to exposure to the disease.

Consequences are extremely severe causing immense psychological distress and due to the shortage in matters of individual protective tools things are getting complicated with time. Moreover, nurses who are critically treating the patients are greater prone to secondary traumatic stress [18]. There are risk factors of depression, anxiety and the level of stress is significantly high to get managed by the health care professionals in absolute style. They have the best potential to deal with the sort of COVID trauma and suggest people an effective way out with complete relaxed and restorative psyche.

The Causes of Mental Illness

Due to the chronic and severe nature of the ailment and the related social

disadvantages people suffering from SMI live in the kind of residential and the complete congregate setting like the psychiatry patient division with the supported hostels and housing staffs and there are even the homeless shelters and the prisons [19]. The environment is at an increased risk of the pandemic outbreak of the disease and infection which includes COVID 19 and rest of the physiological disorders associated with the ailment in specific.

Due to the chronic and severe nature of the illness, the overcrowded spaces can lead to the acute spread of the disease and it will not take time to spread from one to hundred. A room which can accommodate not more than 3 people, if made to more than 5 then it will slow down the recovery process. The rapid spread of the infection will make the population suffer like nothing. It is just like the federal prison system and there are various psychiatric hospitals ready to accommodate patients suffering from acute illness. There is the psychiatric ward in Indonesia causing the physiological upheaval with the rest of the physiological absurdities. The kind of mental health makes people suffer from the fear that they can die at any moment. COVID can ruin life completely and it is a threat that can damage the population on a larger scale.

People living with severe infection are greatly prone to COVID outcome and this led to the kind of acute disorder of the human respiratory system. This is plausibly known as the respiratory distress syndrome with high rate of mortality in specific. SMI is a condition arising from chronic COVID condition and it even comes with the adverse lifestyle factors and things include physical inactivity and smoking. As a consequence of SMI, one may even suffer from side effects due to psychiatric medication specific. SMI in particular linked with atypical antipsychotics and it is known to have connection with the metabolic syndrome in matters of weight gain and hyperlipidaemia and there is even

the state of impaired glucose control. These are factors having link with severe and long-standing infection in matters of SARS-CoV-2 [20]. There are rest of the concerns related to clozapine and there is even the gold standard antipsychotic for the right treatment for the condition of schizophrenia. Clozapine has also connection with haematological and it has the side effect of neutropenia and also with the life-threatening outcome of agranulocytosis.

However, the main concern lies with the interruption in case of the clozapine treatment when the count of the WBC is comparatively low. This can of course pose the kind of greater challenge in the safe handling of the COVID 19 infected individuals. However, there can be the risk of the relapsing of the prime psychotic disorder. There have been theoretical concerns regarding the issue of benzodiazepines and it is associated with the respiratory and depressive functionality. There are more things associated with the COVID state and includes misattribution of the various symptoms and the kind of stigmatizing attitude in case of the health care professionals.

The Importance Maintaining Mental Health

During the COVID time, it is important to take care of your health and this will help you cope up with the different problems in life with the best of ease. It is sure to offer the feeling of wellbeing and the kind of inner strength. In the way, you can take the right care of your body by staying aware of the COVID related issues from the beginning till the end. In Indonesia, people are overtly health-conscious [21]. They are worried about the facts that coronavirus can surely ruin their existence. Thus, it is important to adopt the safety measures in time by enhancing your inner strength through self-awareness and feeling of perfect wellbeing.

There are certain tips to help you stay well and gain the right confidence in time to perform and achieve vigorously. It is important to pay attention to what the government is saying regarding how to stay safe during the COVID period. In the case, you should start with the dos and don'ts with the rest of the specifications concerning health and mental soundness. It is the time when you should be concerned about personal hygiene and take care of the family at the same time. As you take the best care of your body at the same time it is necessary to do things to keep your mind in the best of state. Once you are happy it is easy to cope up with the problems in life without hesitation. Eating the right kind of food will help you stay fit physically and will also help in having the best mental presence. With the elevation of the energy level, there is the feeling of goodness which can encourage the sort of healthy lifestyle and live along with the kind of positive thinking.

In case one does not know what food to eat he can ask the health care professional and he will suggest in terms of healthy diet intake [22]. At the same time, it is vital to have regular exercising. This will help in keeping the mind and the body physiologically fit and active. Being physiologically active will help an individual stay happy and enjoy life normally as it comes. It is the way one can stay independent at a specific age. Regular exercising can lead to long-term benefits and can help in fighting against deadly diseases like COVID 19 and the like.

These are concepts highly popular in Indonesia and can indeed make way for the best physiological and psychological wellbeing. To stay away from the ailment, it is necessary to have good sleeping conditions. This will help the mind and the bodies feel better and help the individual performance with the best of confidence even in the pandemic situation. To stay safe from the ailment it is better not to have things like nicotine, caffeine and alcohol. It is best to have herbal chamomile tea to

keep the inner system clean and functional. In case there is the feeling of sickness it is important to consult the physician on immediate basis. The Indonesians are aware of the specifications to let things happen for the best even in the situation of COVID 19.

Research Gap

COVID is the new and the deadly virus spreading to various nations at the fastest. The disease is fast spreading to Indonesia and the rest of the world. It is, however, important to know about the facts and symptoms of COVID 19 in specific. It is important to know how the virus spread and likewise it is important to take precautions at the right time. There are most things one should know in keeping the family safe from the deadly virus [23]. This is how one can keep the community safe with the necessary safety measures and options in hand and stay safe from the coronavirus on a long-term basis.

There are lots of misconceptions and wrong data regarding the COVID 19 disease. There are several details revealed by World Health Organization and these are details to consider when dealing with the virus with the level of awareness and the perfect details on the topic in specific. There are rules made right by the World Health Organization. There is the government health authority in specifying the rules regarding COVID 19. COVID is becoming more persistent and dangerous than HIV. It will take time for the Indonesians to know about the complete details of the disease with the list of specifications and norms.

know more about the condition it is best to stay linked online to have the latest details on the ailment. Most people suffering from COVID have mild symptoms. One among the six people can become severely ill and needs hospitalization and best of medical attention. According to the scientific model, one among the 100 affected by COVID will die due to the disease, in case

of medical care is not given at the right time.

Any person from any global destination can get affected by COVID 19. The disease can readily attack irrespective of the race and colour of the skin. However, people having complaints of asthma, diabetes and heart disease are more prone to get affected by COVID 19. The virus can be more dangerous in older people and the case, it will take time to recover [12,26]. Any untreated medical complicated when coupled with the attack of COVID 19. Thus, it is best to stay safe and healthy to avoid conditions of severe COVID symptoms. There is no need to believe that when taking HIV medicine will not save you from the attack of COVID 19. In the case, there are certain ART drugs and these are essentially trailed to use in treating the COVID disease. Before the treatment, it is important to keep the immunity system strong and healthy. It is not right to share HIV drugs with someone having COVID virus. COVID can resist high temperature and thus, it is necessary to follow all suggestions when coping up with the ailment so highly infectious and communicable. There are methods and ways to collect details on the disease and stay safe from the sort of contamination before life is at risk.

Discussion

Lockdown from Covid-19 was imposed in Indonesia from the first week of March and between 1st March to 1st June cases of covid-19 increased sharply. On 8th July 2020, 68,790 cases of covid- 19 were identified across 34 provinces of Indonesia [24]. Due to this rapid increase in cases of Covid-19 infection providing medical help for other physical and psychological issues became impossible. As suggested by Megatsari in this situation mental health of people was continuously decreasing and providing mental health support became a necessity [10]. Government of Indonesia under health

policy initiated mental health counselling through digital platforms for ensuring mental wellbeing of people as well as avoiding violence-related incidents associated with mental health-related issues. As mentioned by Yanti *et al.*, based on the technical platform support, the government of this country initiated a multi-stakeholder programme for supporting the people with mental health support for coping up with the consequences of prolonged lockdown due to covid-19 [25].

The Mental Health Act, 2014 though implemented long ago, and followed by some of the citizens, but not widely popular among all people of the country, but that did not stop them all to feel downward during this situation of pandemic worldwide and the parade of death of their dear ones. Studies showing that there are lack of mental health attendants in Indonesia; among 100 people, there are not even 1 psychiatrist, and hardly 3 nurses for attending the people with mental distress, and help them get back to their normal life. The number of the social workers is also negligible on this ground, and any other health issues are also being not very well attended [27]. The government of Indonesia can consider making a decision about including the services regarding mental health to the community based services in order to ensure a comprehensive approach to the mental health issues and their solution. The decision makers should firstly identify the most vulnerable groups that order to mental health issues and their solution. The decision makers should firstly identify the most vulnerable groups that may have some mental distressful issues due to the continuation of the current pandemic of COVID 19, for instance, the group of people that have lost their job during this situation, or have lost their family members or acquaintances should be taken special care of. Healthcare workers can make another vulnerable group, as they are witnessing the parade of death every day in

front of them being absolutely helpless due to the inadequacy of the proper treatment measure [28].

The initiative taken so far by the government of Indonesia is to enforce necessities considering earlier conditions, timings, priorities, coordination between regions as well as nations, and also monitoring and evaluation of the possibly provided solutions and aids [24]. The reopening of the affairs including tourism, hotels, departmental stores, restaurants, airports, as well as places of worships and other public activities, in various provinces of Indonesia is taken under this plan and monitored by the responsible authority who are tracking any sign of distress and deploying help immediately.

Mental health-related issues became a primary consequence associated with the rapid increase in covid-19 cases. Nursalam *et al.* suggested that uncertain lockdown and restriction socialisation increased loneliness and depression [29]. Socio-economic instability also increases depression and anxiety that led to an increase in psychological disorders. Not only common people but also the frontline support provider such a medical professionals and security charges were also affected by this lockdown as it became difficult for them also to maintain communication with their family members [30]. Public awareness and community engagement was the only way to ensure the mental wellbeing of people. The Government of Indonesia considers supporting people through digital platforms for aiding psychological wellbeing associated with consequences.

According to the World Medical Association (2021), the “Right to Health” is considered to be an Inclusive right considering the ensured healthy living with “potable water and adequate sanitation” besides the timely and appropriate health care for all living human being. The right to health also serves with the opportunity to healthy occupational and environmental situations as well as the access to the

information and education that is related to health, which also includes the sexual and reproductive health. This right also addresses the mental health issues to be treated as same as the physical health issues with timely detection and appropriate treatment measure [31]. Observing the present situation of Indonesia, and the government’s failure to address and resolve the mental health issues of the citizens during the distress of the pandemic, it can be said the people of Indonesia are being torn apart from their basic inclusive right to health.

The lack in prioritization of the mental health issue in Indonesia is leading this developing country to a future with a community burden of mentally unstable citizen [10]. All the living people witnessing the pandemic are having a huge impact in their mind that they will be continuing to remember until the last breath of their life, and also will convey the tale of this experience to their future generation. If the failure of the government to control the situation persists for long, the people may be healthy physically, but their mental integrity will completely break down as the impact of this situation [32]. The mental health prospects Indonesian Government is still following to address the situation of the mental health challenge, is not enough to resolve this distress, and the whole nation is going to suffer because of this in future.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that it becomes necessary to increase public awareness for avoiding mental health consequences as well as avoiding the impact of changes in the socio-economic environment of the country. It can be identified that the burden of mental health issues is much higher in Indonesia and this country needs to increase availability of professional help for supporting people dealing with psychological issues. Policies

are needed to be strengthened in terms of incorporating evidence-based approaches.

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