

Anxiety levels among health care workers within Irish mental health services during COVID-19: A survey

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INTRODUCTION

The covid-19 pandemic has heavily burdened, and in some cases overwhelmed, healthcare systems throughout the world. Healthcare workers are not only at heightened risk of infection, but also of adverse mental health outcomes. A recent meta-analysis looking at the various studies examining the impact of COVID-19 on HCW found that the prevalence rates of anxiety and depression (23.2% and 22.8% respectively) of HCWs during COVID-19. To date little literature exists in relation to the impact of pandemic on health care workers within mental health.

The primary aim of this survey is to determine if there had been an increase in the anxiety levels in mental health workers during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Cork region. It further examined the effects of information dissemination, managerial support and risk management on these anxiety levels.

METHODS

The survey was conducted online via an anonymised questionnaire that had been assembled by the research team, and disseminated by management through the heads of various disciplines within the mental health workforce, using the HSE email portal. It was made available for participation for one month (July 2020). Following the responses collection stage the reported anxiety levels were analysed before and during the pandemic (assessed via GAD-7 scale) using a paired samples t-test. Further analysis of the data was conducted through a series of Pearson correlations and hierarchical regressions to assess any statistically significant correlations between variables and any predictive value that the independent variables may have on the dependent variable.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Participants (N= 102) were recruited from a variety of disciplines with Allied Health Professional being the most predominant discipline 48% (N= 49). with 81.2% of the participants being females and 18.8% being males. See pie chart below.

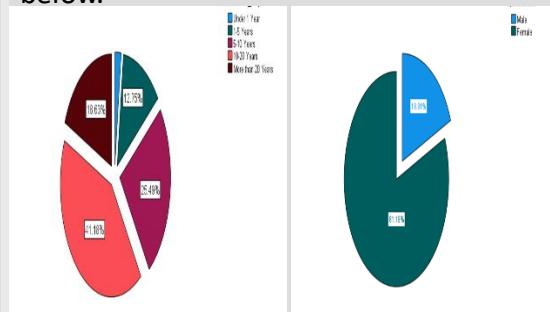


Figure 1. Pie Chart Representing Frequency of Disciplines(left)

Figure 2. Pie Chart Representing Frequency of Gender(right)

Childcare Concerns & HSE Supports

Participants were asked question regarding childcare concerns and alterations to working arrangements. The results of these questions can be viewed on the pie chart below.

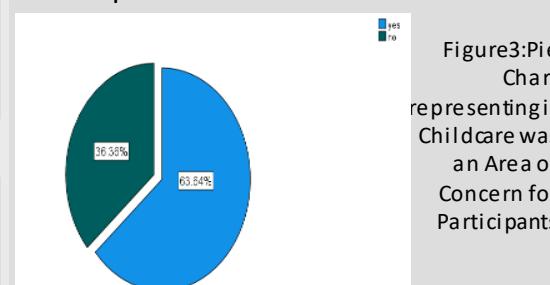


Figure 3: Pie Chart representing if Childcare was an Area of Concern for Participants

Differential Statistics

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare mental healthcare workers' anxiety levels in pre-Covid-19 and during Covid-19. There was a significant difference in the mean GAD-7 total scores for pre-Covid-19 (M=4.08, SD=2.99) and during Covid-19 (M=9.27, SD=6.04) conditions; $t(100)=-9.30, p < .0001$.

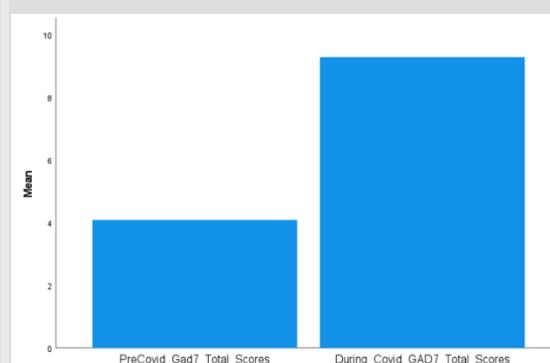


Figure 4.

Bar chart representing mean GAD-7 Scores Pre-Covid-19 Pandemic and During Covid-19 Pandemic

RESULTS CONT.

Inferential Statistics

Managerial support had a statistically significant moderate negative relationship with GAD-7 scores during the Covid-19 pandemic ($r = -.50, p < .0001$).

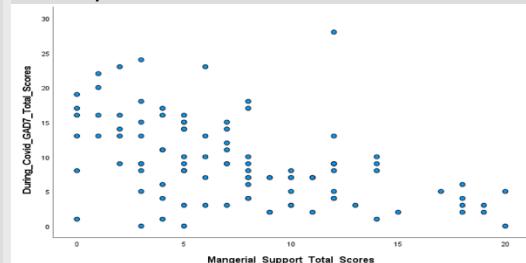


Figure 5.

Scatter plot representing correlation between managerial support and gad-7 total scores for during covid-19 pandemic.

There was no correlation found between the GAD-7 total scores during Covid-19 pandemic and Information dissemination total scores ($r = .25, p < .01$) nor Risk/safety total scores ($r = .08, p > .05$).

CONCLUSIONS

Anxiety levels have increased during the covid-19 pandemic amongst mental healthcare workers which supports previous research on MERS CoV (Al-Rabiaah et al., 2020). Childcare has also remained a concern for healthcare workers based on this study, which was also supported by previous research on Covid-19 (Shanafelt, Ripp & Trockel, 2020). Managerial support was found to have an effect on anxiety levels in this study. Thus might have a protective role in healthcare workers anxiety levels. A further examination of these managerial supports and their effectiveness may be of benefit as previous research has shown negative long-term effects of stress and anxiety during a pandemic (Mauder et al., 2006)

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DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest:

The authors have no conflict of interest to report.

Financial Sponsorship:

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Ethical Standards:

This study has received formal ethical approval from NREC-COVID-19 with the HRB, Ireland and was conducted in accordance with these parameters.

This study was presented in the Cork Deanery day conference on 16/10/2020.

CONTACT