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OPEN PEER REVIEW

Persistent Psychological Distress and Its Associated Determinants Among Iranian COVID Survivors: A Cross-Sectional Study

Abbas Ebadi, Fataneh Ghadirian, Faegheh Shokri, Seyedeh Setayesh Imani, Goli Saeidi, Fatemeh Zahra Mostafazadeh, Amirhossein Shafighi

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About this report

This open peer review (OPR) report shows the public comments made on this article during peer review, by the reviewers, the associate editor and the editor-in-chief, for every revision round, together with the authors' replies. Comments appear only with the consent of the people who wrote them. Reviewers who chose to sign their report are named; the others are shown as "Referee". Comments are edited for language only, and confidential remarks to the editors are not included.

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1 Original submission

3 comments · 26 Jun 2024 – 13 Jul 2024

Referee 1 Reviewer

MINOR REVISION 26 Jun 2024

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the opportunity to review this original research manuscript entitled "Persistent Psychological Distress and its Associated Determinants within the Iranian COVID Survivors: A Cross-Sectional Study" for potential publication in the Middle East Journal of Rehabilitation and Health.

Overall, I found the study to be well conducted, and the findings provide valuable insights into challenges faced by COVID-19 survivors in Iran.
Some elements could be strengthened for this publication:

Abstract:
Objectives: Be more specific about the "sociodemographic determinants" that were analyzed, such as age, gender, income level, etc.
Methods: Specify the sample size (n=300) earlier for clarity. Mention whether ethics approval was obtained.
Presentation of results may benefit from the inclusion of actual scores/percentages rather than qualitative descriptors to strengthen conclusions.
Minor grammatical refinement in places would polish the manuscript.

Background:
In the background, if there is a relevant study from Iran, it is better to add it to this section.
In the background section under objectives, it is better to clearly specify which sociodemographic information will be evaluated.

Methods:
For the participants section, it is suggested to clarify how the initial sample size of 11,337 was obtained (e.g., from medical records at each hospital). Consider adding some details on how random sampling was implemented, such as using a table of random numbers.
It would be good to specify the inclusion/exclusion criteria in more detail rather than just listing them. For example, clarify the age range, time since COVID symptoms/diagnosis, etc.
For the procedures, mention whether ethical approval was obtained and, if so, what type. Also clarify whether consent was oral, written, electronic, etc.
Provide some validity and reliability details for the DASS-21 instrument, such as correlating it with another validated scale and reporting Cronbach's alpha values.
In the data analysis section, consider expanding on the specific statistical tests that will be used rather than just general descriptions (e.g., mention use of ANOVA, regression, etc.).

Discussion:
Discuss potential explanations for any inconsistencies compared to other research.
Speculate more on why certain factors like gender, education level, etc. correlated with higher PD.

Limitations and strengths:
Discuss measures taken to minimize limitations.
Highlight key strengths such as sample size, use of standardized tools, and comprehensive assessment of multiple determinants.

Conclusions:
Discuss the importance and relevance of the findings to the mental health care context in Iran.

Thank you again for the opportunity to evaluate this timely submission. I hope my feedback proves constructive in strengthening the manuscript for your readers.

Referee 2 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 8 Jul 2024

no comments

Editor-in-Chief

MAJOR REVISION 13 Jul 2024

Dear Authors
According to the reviewers' and associate editor's comments, your article needs major revision. When revising your manuscript, please consider all issues mentioned in the reviewers' comments carefully: please outline every change made in response to their comments and submit the required files.

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Revision 1

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Reply to Reviewers (148680) (1st Revision)

Persistent Psychological Distress and its Associated Determinants within the Iranian COVID Survivors: A Cross-Sectional Study

Dear Editor-in-Chief,

I would like to express my gratitude for taking the time to review our manuscript (ID 148680). We have made revisions based on your reviewers' feedback and are prepared to make any additional changes if necessary.

Sincerely,

Reviewer 1:

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the opportunity to review this original research manuscript entitled "Persistent Psychological Distress and its Associated Determinants within the Iranian COVID Survivors: A Cross-Sectional Study" for potential publication in the Middle East Journal of Rehabilitation and Health.

Overall, I found the study to be well conducted and the findings provide valuable insights into challenges faced by COVID-19 survivors in Iran. Some elements could be strengthened for this publication:

A. Great thanks for your valuable opinion.

Abstract:

Objectives: Be more specific about the "sociodemographic determinants" that were analyzed, such as age, gender, income level etc. Methods: Specify the sample size (n=300) earlier for clarity. Mention if ethics approval was obtained. Presentation of results may benefit from inclusion of actual scores/percentages rather than qualitative descriptors to strengthen conclusions.

Minor grammatical refinement in places would polish the manuscript.

A. According to your esteemed comment, the entire abstract has been revised grammatically. Also, more quantitative statistical values were added. Added information about ethical issues and examples. Unfortunately, due to the limitation of completeness and the extent of demographic information, it has only been discussed briefly. I hope the explanations provided will be accepted.

Background:

In the background, if there is a relevant study from Iran, it is better to add it to this section. In the background section under objectives, it is better to clearly specify which socio-demographic information will be evaluated.

A. As per your request, we made every effort to incorporate Iranian studies into the project. However, we were unable to successfully include sociodemographic information due to various constraints and limitations. I apologize and hope that the explanations given will be understood.

Methods:

For the participants section, it is suggested to clarify how the initial sample size of 11,337 was obtained (e.g. from medical records at each hospital). Consider adding some details on how random sampling was implemented, such as using a table of random numbers. It would be good to specify the inclusion/exclusion criteria in more detail rather than just listing them. For example, clarify the age range, time since COVID symptoms/diagnosis, etc. For the procedures, mention if and what type of ethical approval was obtained. Also clarify if consent was oral, written, electronic etc. Provide some validity and reliability details for the DASS-21 instrument, such as correlating it with another validated scale and reporting Cronbach's alpha values. In the data analysis section, consider expanding on the specific statistical tests that will be used rather than just general descriptions (e.g. mention use of ANOVA, regression etc.).

A. As mentioned earlier, samples were obtained via electronic records through the HIS system (highlighted). More information about how to sample has been added in the "Procedures" section. More information regarding inclusion criteria were added. Detailed and complete ethical

information have been already presented in the Ethical considerations section(highlighted). More information regarding VALIDITY and RELIABILITY were added. More information about the "data analysis" tests was added and highlighted in the text.

Discussion:
Discuss potential explanations for any inconsistencies compared to other research. Speculate more on why certain factors like gender, education level, etc. correlated with higher PD.

A. The differences in the results compared with other studies were attributed to methodological, demographic and cultural differences. However, more details were added (highlighted).

Limitations and strengths:
Discuss measures taken to minimize limitations
Highlight key strengths such as sample size, use of standardized tools, comprehensive assessment of multiple determinants

A. While we appreciate the important points you specified, unfortunately, due to limitations in the study process, we were unable to address the limitations you mentioned (Tehran and a sample of 300 people). However, in regard to the "strengths", while some specific points were mentioned in the text, information has been provided about the unique feature of this (Bayesian) study

Conclusion:
Discuss importance and relevance of findings to mental health care context in Iran

A. Your esteemed comment has been fully addressed in the Implications section

Thank you again for the opportunity to evaluate this timely submission. I hope my feedback proves constructive in strengthening the manuscript for your readers.

A. We greatly appreciate your time in reviewing our submission and offering valuable feedback. Your insights have been carefully taken into consideration as we strive to improve the manuscript for our audience. Your expertise in evaluating our work is invaluable to us, and we are thankful for your input.

Reviewer 2:
Based on uploaded DOCX file:

- Recheck all the manuscript based on English language writing

A. Based on your opinion, it was considered to the greatest extent

- This study dosent add new knowledge.

A. The implications of the study along with innovation and what has been added to the body of literature, have been fully mentioned in the sections of INTRODUCTION, ANALYSIS and IMPLICATION (Highlighted)

- If this study aim to prevalence… the title should be corrected.

A. The study aims to examine the prevalence of a specific condition, but this is not its sole purpose. The study also encompasses a range of descriptive and analytical factors that were incorporated into the overall goal. A central focus of the study is the intricate network of relationships between different factors that contribute to the manifestation and persistence of the condition being studied.

- Make it shorter

A. Unfortunately, two of the other reviewers of the study insisted on adding some information to the method (abstract) section, which contradicts your opinion and has put us in a dilemma. However, we tried to implement summarization in other parts of the method (Highlighted). If the explanation provided is not acceptable, we are fully prepared to further summarize the method. We are completely obedient to your orders.

- Version????

A. Considered. Thanks

- 7 key words????

A. Considered. Mitigated to 6

- 26 refrences in introduction part is not sems to be a scientific.

A. If you believe there are too many references, it should be clarified that this was done in order to ensure comprehensive information. Still, we made efforts to eliminate references with more duplication. It is important to mention that other reviewers recommended adding new content to the introduction, but we followed your instructions.

- Site???

Please recheck all the manuscript for English writing

A. I was unsure of your suggestion, but after discussing with other authors, we decided to go with a new subtitle. We hope it will be approved, but we are open to hearing any alternative suggestions you may have.

- Interventions??????????????????

A. Considered. Thanks

- Please provide explanation about their reliability in Iran

A. Considered. Thanks

- Rewrite this part in a scientific pattern.

A. It has been rewritten and revised to the greatest extent

- Too long.

Make it shorter

A. We did our best and reduced from 152 words to 103 words

In the study of prevalence type? Is it it nesseccary to report this part????? Recheck.

A. As described in the main objectives, the main feature of our study was networking using Bayesian analysis.

- Repeted part

A. We apologize. One of them was related to "Implications". We deeply apologize for the mistake.

- Rewrite. This is result not conclusion

A. It has been totally rewritten and revised to the greatest extent

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Associate Editor 1:

Persistent Psychological Distress and its Associated Determinants within the Iranian COVID Survivors: A Cross-Sectional

- Considering that a long time has passed since the announcement of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic period, the authors should clarify the importance of the study and highlight the clarity of the work in the introduction.

A- Although there was information in this regard in the introduction, however, according to your order, new supplementary information have been added.

- In the inclusion criteria of the severity of COVID-19 or cognitive status, was not effective?

A. The inclusion criteria have been updated according to your order. Moreover, the missing information relating COVID severity has been added.

- How was the selection of participants based on the inclusion criteria? by whom?

A. Thank you for your feedback. We appreciate your attentiveness in identifying the gap in our article, and we have made the necessary updates (Highlighted). [*by the main researcher and two other colleagues who were fully knowledgeable about the study, methodology, and sampling process*] [*The process of verifying eligibility and selecting participants according to the inclusion criteria relied on the information found in their medical records*]

- Who explained the research objectives to the participants?

A. Thank you for your feedback. We appreciate your attentiveness in identifying the gap in our article, and we have made the necessary updates (Highlighted). [*by the main researcher and two other colleagues who were fully knowledgeable about the study, methodology, and sampling process*]

- The authors mentioned that the consent form and the questionnaires were completed online, so one of the inclusion criteria was access and the ability to work with smart tools. In some of the participants, this issue required prior training. Did the participants have training to complete the questionnaires?

A. More explanations in this regard have been added in the method (Highlighted). Respondents found the questionnaire process to be straightforward, receiving the links through various messaging apps or SMS. Instructions were provided on how to complete the survey, with some individuals even borrowing phones from family members. However, a considerable portion of participants were unable to complete the questions, leading to a substantial disparity between the initial and final sample sizes as discussed in the article.

- Are the questionnaires used in Iran valid and reliable? Add reference.

A. Tool's information has been updated.

- Limitations and strengths are mentioned twice in the manuscript.

A. We apologize. One of them was related to "Implications". We deeply apologize for the mistake.

- What does the present study add to the body of literature? To be added at the end of the discussion.

A. This issue is fully addressed in the IMPLICATIONS section. However, more information has been added to it.

EIC Decision:

Dear Authors

According to the reviewers and associated editor's comments, your article needs to be revised majorly. When revising your manuscript, please consider all issues mentioned in the reviewers' comments carefully: please outline every change made in response to their comments and submit the required files up two months.

A. Great thanks for your valuable opinion. We have considered all of your reviewers' valuable comments precisely.

2 Revision 1

4 comments · 24 Jul 2024 – 29 Jul 2024

Referee 2 Reviewer — ACCEPT 24 Jul 2024

No comments.

Referee 1 Reviewer — ACCEPT 27 Jul 2024

Dear Editor,

The revisions and changes requested have been implemented by the author to a reasonable extent.

Sincerely,

Associate Editor — ACCEPT 28 Jul 2024

The manuscript is ready for publication.

Editor-in-Chief — ACCEPT 29 Jul 2024

Dear Authors
We are pleased to inform you that your article is accepted for publication in the MEJRHS. We hope to receive other qualified articles from your group.