COVID-19' social restrictions: challenges and\or opportunities for mental health of individuals and society

القيود الاجتماعية المفروضة خلال أزمة الكوفيد 19-: تحديات وتطلعات الصحة النفسية للأفراد والمجتمع

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Abstract:

According to the COVID-19 crisis and established social restrictions, our sense of normalcy, our usual social life was disrupted. The situation with Quarantine, lockdown and social restrictions creates new reality for individuals and for global society as well. We must reflect on the current global mental health challenges and plan for the future world sustainable development and\or future pandemic challenges now.

The research aims to map the effects of social restrictions (currently, COVID-19 Quarantine) on the well-being of individuals and society

The participants (551 in total) completed online survey (a combination of open- and closed-ended questions about the students' perceptions of various societal and institutional COVID-19 restrictions\measures) during April-May 2020

The established social restrictions were divided into 3 semantic groups: hygiene, social distancing, staying at home. The specificity of participants' compliance to these restrictions received great deal of attention in this article. The positive and negative consequences of Quarantine for mental health of individuals and societies were discussed

It was stated that Only awareness and following the rules of "holistic health" will help to build well-being of societies. Prospects for the future - in building a health-oriented society and a health-oriented economy

Key words: COVID-19 – social restrictions – mental health – consequences of Quarantine – well-being

Résumé :

A cause de la crise du COVID-19 et les restrictions sociales établies, notre sens de la normalité et notre vie sociale habituelle ont été perturbés. La situation avec le confinement, le verrouillage et les restrictions sociales ont créé une nouvelle réalité tant pour les individus que pour les sociétés dans le monde. A cet effet nous devons réfléchir aux enjeux mondiaux actuels en matière de santé mentale, et planifier le développement durable mondial futur et/ou les futurs défis pandémiques.

La recherche vise à cartographier les effets des restrictions sociales (actuellement : COVID-19 et confinement) sur le bien-être des individus et de la société

Les participants (551 au total) ont répondu à un sondage en ligne (une combinaison de questions ouvertes et fermées sur les perceptions des étudiants de diverses restrictions/mesures du COVID-19 sociétales et institutionnelles) en avril-mai 2020.

Les restrictions sociales établies ont été divisées en trois groupes sémantiques : hygiène, distanciation sociale, rester à la maison. La spécificité du respect de ces restrictions par les participants a fait l'objet d'une grande attention dans cet article. Les conséquences positives et négatives du confinement sur la santé mentale des individus et des sociétés ont été discutées.

Il a été déclaré que seuls la prise de conscience et le respect des règles de la «santé holistique» contribueraient à renforcer le bien-être des sociétés. Perspectives pour l'avenir - dans la construction d'une société axée sur la santé et d'une économie axée sur la santé.

Mots-clés : COVID-19 - Restrictions sociales - Santé mentale - Conséquences du confinement – well-being

الملخص:

لا يختلف إثنان على أنّ الحياة الاجتماعية قد تعطّلت واضطربت نتيجة لجائحة كوفيد 19 (COVID-19) والقيود الاجتماعية المفروضة بسببها، مما أثّر أيضا على شعورنا بالحياة الطبيعية. بالفعل فإنّ تعطل حياتنا الاجتماعية المعتادة بسبب الحجر الصحي والإغلاق والقيود الاجتماعية، كلها خلقت واقعًا جديدًا سواء بالنسبة للأفراد أو للمجتمع ككل. وبالتالي فمن الواجب التفكير في تحديات الصحة النفسية العالمية الحالية والتخطيط للتنمية المستدامة في العالم في المستقبل، وكذا التحديات الوبائية المستقبلية منذ الآن.

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى وضع خريطة لتأثير القيود الاجتماعية المفروضة (الحدر الصحي بالخصوص) على جودة الحياة ورفاهية الأفراد والمجتمع على حد سواء.

استعملنا في هذه الدراسة استبيانا متكوّنا من مجموعة مختلطة من الأسئلة المفتوحة والمغلقة، تتعلق بتصورات الطلاب حول القيود والتدابير المتخذة من قبل المؤسسات والمجتمع. شارك في الاجابة على الاستبيان عبر الانترنت 551 طالبا جامعيا، وذلك في الفترة الممتدة بين شهري أبريل ومايو 2020.

تمّ تقسيم القيود والتدابير الاجتماعية الموضوعة إلى 3 مجموعات دلالية: النظافة، والتباعد الاجتماعي ، والمكوث في المنزل. حظي متغير امتثال المشاركين إلى هذه القيود باهتمام كبير في تحليل نتائج هذه الدراسة. تمت مناقشة الآثار الإيجابية والسلبية للحجر الصحي على الصحة النفسية للأفراد والمجتمعات **الخاتمة** توصلنا إلى أن الوعي وكذا اتباع "القواعد العامة للصحة" هما فقط من يساعد في بناء رفاهية المجتمعات. بالنسبة للآفاق المستقبلية فتتمثل في السعي لبناء مجتمع وكذا اقتصاد موجهان نحو الصحة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كوفيد 19 - القيود الاجتماعية - الصحة النفسية - قيود الحجر الصحي.

Introduction:

The world was facing an unprecedented crisis as COVID-19 spreads rapidly around the globe. Our sense of normalcy was being disrupted as governments continued to introduce far-reaching measurements. This was leaving many alone and socially isolated. Therefore, we must reflect on the current global mental health challenges and plan for the future world sustainable development and\or future pandemic challenges now. This new reality raises many important questions: How can we face and prepare for this new reality mentally? How will we be able to create a society and economy oriented on mental health? How should we improve Mental Health Care systems globally? Should countries deal with the post-quarantine situation separately or would a global approach be better?

1- Purpose:

The research aims to map the effects of social restrictions (currently, COVID-19 Quarantine) on the well-being of individuals and society

2. Methodology

2.1. Tool :

The study was conducted using authors' questionnaire: the combination of open- and closed-ended questions about the students' perceptions of various societal and institutional COVID-19 restrictions\measures

2.2.Statistic :

The data analysis was executed in SPSS and R (IBM Corp, 2017). Mean scores for the questionnaires were calculated

2.3.Participants and geography :

The survey was distributed using the convenience sampling technique among the university students in five countries: Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Ukraine (551 students in total). The survey was compiled in English and has been additionally translated into German, Italian and Ukrainian

2.4.Organization :

The survey was conducted in April-May 2020 (by the international team of researchers from Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Ukraine)

3. Results :

During the period March-May 2020, despite some differences between the countries, the social restrictions\measures they enacted were quite similar.

Table 1 shows the overview of these restrictions\measures.

Table 1 Governmental COVID-19 Quarantine measures

	Finland	Germany	Italy	the Netherlands	Ukraine
Call for 1.5 meters distancing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Inability to go for	No	No	Partly	No	No

walks					
Universities/Schools stopped face-to-face education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hospitality sector closed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Working at home for non-crucial professions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Borders closed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Restriction on public transport	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ban on public gatherings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guest visits banned	Yes	Partly	Partly	No	No
Visits to patients at care institutions banned	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Use of mask and/or gloves in public places	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

It is possible to divide these main restrictions for societal participation into the three semantic groups:

- Hygiene
- Social distancing
- Staying at home

The mean scores regarding compliance with COVID-19 restrictions\measures can be found in Table 2

Table 2 Compliance with restrictions\measures (1 always, 5 never)

	M	*SD*
Hygiene (*Use of mask and/or gloves in public places; Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth; Wash hands frequently*)	2.35	1.03

Social distancing (*Avoid meeting with friends and family; Maintaining distance when meeting others*)	2.12	0.94
Staying at home (*As much as possible staying at home*)	2.03	0.78

4. Discussion :

According to the obtained results, it is possible to define even some positive consequences of the Quarantine. We were given time and opportunity:

- to improve our diet (regular meals; full breakfast, lunch and dinner; eat not "in a hurry"... It is definitely positive for our gastrointestinal tract)
- to increase time for physical recreation

However, we are facing and other consequences of the Quarantine:

4.1 HYGIENE

Without any doubts, disinfectants can destroy pathogenic microbes on our skin. ... But at the same time, frequent using of disinfectants reduces the natural immunity of our skin, makes it more vulnerable to infections\diseases

Changing the mode of physical activity, restrictions on the "consumption" of oxygen (breathing in masks ...) and the sun... All of these certainly lead to changes in physiological processes, disrupt the established chemical balance in our body...

The logical question is arising: how to protect own body from the coronavirus now and don't lose own immunity after?

4.2 STAYING AT HOME

1. "ETERNAL" communication

Dreams about eternity\constancy of pleasure from relationships is a significant "archetype" of the human psyche, an essential determinant of psychological development and well-being. But do we get full enjoyment of martial relationships and communication in 24 \ 7 mode by living in the conditions of Quarantine week after week ?

Being in a confined space, with significant limitations of social contacts, ... becomes a huge challenge for interpersonal \ marital relationships, the mental well-being of each spouse \ family. When you open your eyes and see him / her, you close your eyes - and you hear him / her, again and again. When the habits and everyday-living behavior of the partner aren't longer reflected because of the "pink glasses" of external pleasures received during the day. But, conversely, when certain "specifics" of partner's behavior are perceived through the "magnifying glass" of everyday routine, boredom, nervous exhaustion. When "escape" from martial\family problems is appearing as impossible. When there isn't any "audience" in front of which the "theatre" of marital / family relations will be disclosed, performed. When there isn't any "social mirror" (especially if you are an extrovert) and habitual time, space for privacy (especially if you are an introvert).

How can you don't bring yourself and your family to a similar finale?

How to maintain a sense of mental well-being during such period?

Recommendation 1. DO MAKE YOUR DAILY SCHEDULE.

Structurizing and organizing your daily activities will give you a sense of rhythm, a sense of orderliness, stability and control over life events. This will in turn lead to a sense of psychological security and safety

In terms of psychophysiology, the brain will not spend energy on many irradial signals simultaneously in different parts of our body, and will form a clear system of radial signals to the corresponding areas. Of course, this will only have a positive effect on our physical health and immunity

Recommendation 2. DO ESTABLISH FAMILY RITUALS\TRADITIONS.

Establishment and fulfilment of certain family traditions (common family joggings, common morning exercises, family dinners, etc.) will bring the needed "novelty" to your everyday life. Performing joint activities will give you a sense of

psychological "unity", "community". It will become as a "theater" that will give you rest from everyday life

Get remember the ancient folk wisdom: "Fight fire with fire"))). If this virus came to us from China, then you will also establish a Chinese tea ceremony in your family. Do study not only Indian “Kama sutra”, but also familiarize yourself with ancient Chinese and Japanese tractates about love. Choose the best from them ... It will open up a "new breath" in your marital relationship, give effect of "raisins" ... And quarantine will finish to be "die-away")))

Recommendation 3. CONSIDER QUARANTINE AS A TIME FOR SELF-ANALYSIS, LIVING PLANNING

2. **Diversity and ambivalence of media "interpretations" of the situation**

The media space is fulled with diverse and opposite information. Various public organizations are actively declaring the actions of the authorities as illegal. Frequently, they are spreading recommendations on how not to perform these actions. Many people try to "bypass" the decisions and measures of the state

Consequently :

✓ People feel theirself as dissatisfied with the basic need for security. They are experiencing in a situation of uncertainty. According to the laws of psychology, this leads to increasing of aggression in society (if everyone blames everyone, you want to radically destroy everything, cut the "Gordian knot").

✓ the segmentation of society, and the level of aggression will be increasing

Recommendations: to organize “filter” for shared information, to limit for the viewing of news that cause anxiety. To realize that the situation with the coronavirus is unique, and it will take a lot of time and patience to solve it. To improve own mental health: spend more time on your favorite things; do what you

do well (as much as possible). To structure and systematize your daily activities - develop a convenient and useful "daily routine"

4.3 SOCIAL DISTANCING

1. Rising social distrust

Due to the established restrictions, the number of our social contacts has significantly decreased. Every contact we have to make often causes feelings of anxiety and even fear in our mind. Consequently, many people are expressing their dissatisfaction (at the individual level - dissatisfaction with their own body weight, physical condition, psychological condition... and at the social level - dissatisfaction with state policy, society, medicine...)

There are a lot of calls to consider other people as potentially infected, potential spreaders of the dangerous virus in the media, social networks etc. Without any doubts, such kinds of calls are highly useful to prevent spreading of the virus among people. However, psychologically, it will lead to arising of distrust to other persons in our psyche. The social distrust psychologically causes hostility and aggression, strengthens personal egocentrism, destroys established forms of social communication, social ties

Many people are suddenly facing the situation of needs to find individual, internal resources for survival. They aren't satisfied with governmental support in full way. Consequently, this leads to increasing of social distrust, individualization of human social life. Will the government of any country be able to maintain social order and safety in the situation of social distrust? Will an individualized society respect the authority of governmental institutions in such situation ?

Recommendations: statistically, the risk of infection and disease for each individual remains low. You should follow the recommendations on hygiene and personal protection, and do not be afraid of any interaction with people. It would

be useful to develop new channels, forms of communication and involvement in activities that receive social approval (volunteering, support groups, etc.) at this time.

2. **Limitation of communication channels**

To maintain mental health, it is extremely important for a person to receive external information through various channels (visual, audial, tactile, smell senses,). Limitation of information channels leads to arising a feeling of "inferiority" of the received information, distrust to the external reality, inadequacy of perception of an external situation. As a result, it leads to increasing of inappropriate forms of behavior in society, increasing of mental disorders "

Recommendations: to diversify your daily activity, try to use different channels of the senses with activities that can be done at home; establish "system\schedule" of physical activity; try to use meditative practices

Conclusion:

- It is necessary to organize wide social awareness rising campaign, "reform" population' attitudes to health: physical, mental and social. Only awareness and following the rules of "holistic health" will help to build well-being of societies
- Everyone should think that taking care of own mental well-being will depends only on their own efforts. This will increase the chances of overcoming any illness. The experience of quarantine shows that often people, after learning about their diagnosis, began to worry too much, they had high blood pressure or heart failure and they died. Conversely, people, learning about their deadly disease, but mastering themselves, were able to overcome the disease
- Prospects for the future - in building a health-oriented society and a health-oriented economy

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