

Analysis of Pressure Level and Common Stress Sources of Chinese People during Post Covid-19 Period

Yihan Kong

Jsera Catholic High School, San Juan Capistrano, Ca, USA

Keywords: Covid-19, Mental health, Anxiety, Stress, Pandemic, Psychology

Abstract: The novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic, also known as COVID-19, has aroused great public concern and has a strong impact on the emotional health and social mentality of the public. Medical personnel are fighting on the front line of saving lives and caring for the sick. Long-term yet high-load work and exposure to traumatic environments have put them at risk of poor mental health. At the same time, the emotional state of the public will inevitably be affected by the epidemic infection data. Through a series of traditional psychological research methods, this research focuses on the stress level and pressure sources of people in China after the pandemic is under control.

1. Introduction

Anxiety and stress are commonly found in ordinary people in the modern society. People sometimes find a hard time to live a good life in their daily lives through studying or working. In addition to the existing difficulties in life, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a greater impact, often negatively, on people's lives. The lifestyle and future plans of all people were affected and had to be either suspended or changed.

In December 2019, the first COVID-19 case was discovered and confirmed in Wuhan, China. Starting January 2020, the Chinese government took action to stop the spread of the virus through locking down the epicenter, shutting down schools and working places, and ordering medical suppliers to increase their production. The interventions successfully put the virus under control, but, inevitably, posed threats to people's mental health as they restrained the social life and led to several potential problems for one's life, such as reduced salaries and limited international travel. This research focuses on the impact of the pandemic on human's mental health after the virus' most popular season in China. Through the use of the most basic researching methods, social listening, surveying, and interviewing, the stress level and its reasons of different kinds of people in the Chinese society are identified.

2. Research Method

The research was done through social listening. On Weibo, the most popular social media used by the Chinese public to post about their lives, I searched up keywords like stressed, tired, and nervous to find posts that expressed the negative emotions of the users. On the searching tab, I limited the time of posting between April 2020, the time stamp of when there was zero new case in mainland China for the first time, and August 2020, when the research was taking place. Then I got rid of all posts from official accounts such as news agencies or government announcers. I selected 15 posts and carefully examined the profile pages of the users. In order to track the emotional and mental changes, the user must be active through a decent time period and post enough emotional response to his or her encounter in life. After the examination, 9 out of 15 were left in the pool to be qualified for further interview. I messaged each individual and explained my intention of interviewing, asking for their permission of participating in my research. 6 of them were willing to be a part of my research.

I first sent out a Perceived Stress Scale for them to complete (see Fig. 1). [2] The participants were expected to value their own feelings on things happened in their life recently on a scale of 0 to 4, with 0 representing no feelings and 4 representing strong emotions. The results were received and calculated using the scale converter. Based on the calculated stress index, I divided the 6 participants into three groups: High Stress, Moderate Stress, and Low Stress. I then interviewed the reasons of their responses. I also looked through their other posts to find out what was going on in their world to generate some guesses. Sometimes the guesses were verified by their tellings but others were eliminated. Through the conversation, I got to know about their profession, location, and stories behind their positive or negative feedback towards the post-pandemic period.

PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate by circling how often you felt or thought a certain way.

Name _____ Date _____
 Age _____ Gender (Circle): **M** **F** Other _____

0 = Never 1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Fairly Often 4 = Very Often

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly? 0 1 2 3 4
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life? 0 1 2 3 4
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"? 0 1 2 3 4
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? 0 1 2 3 4
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way? 0 1 2 3 4
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do? 0 1 2 3 4
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life? 0 1 2 3 4
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things? 0 1 2 3 4
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control? 0 1 2 3 4
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? 0 1 2 3 4

Fig.1 Perceived Stress Scale Survey (Translated)

3. Findings

Through the interview and the survey, the responses and results were recorded as below. The person with symbol A was identified as Low Stress (with an index between 0 and 10). People with symbol C, D, and E were grouped as Moderate Stress (with an index between 11 and 25). People symbolled B and F were in High Stress (with an index of 26 or above).

Symbol	Profession/Situation	Response (translated)	Stress Index
A	Doctor, served in the front line in the epicenter during the pandemic	I am living an easy life recently. I signed up for the rescue team and went to Wuhan at the end of January 2020. The month there was exhausting and crazy. We got a long break after we came back. This is my second week of the break. I had been working in the hospital every day for years and it is my first time having break for so long. I slept a lot during the first few days and I am now camping. Thus, I have little stress of now. Sometimes I got nervous when I saw a few new cases, but everything went well overall. If you did this research to me two months ago, my stress index would have exploded.	9

B	Student in Mainland China, whose school is re-opening from the recovery of the pandemic	Our school is re-opening soon. I was not paying attention during the last few months when we were taking classes online. We are having an evaluation exam right after the re-opening. I fear my ranking at school would drop significantly. Also, I have not finished the homework yet, which stresses me out.	30
C	International student in the US, whose school was shut down in response to COVID-19	My school was shut down because of the state government's requirement. They are working on developing a new online system where we can have classes online. I am taking a break while they are working on the system, so I am relatively relaxed. I am worried about the pandemic here because we have more than ten thousands of new cases every day. This is probably what makes me nervous.	25
D	Office worker, started working in the office	We were back in the office for work. My job requires communication with others a lot. It feels uncomfortable and inconvenient with my mask on. However, it feels nice to see everyone go back to their normal life. Thinking of being able to get my full salary this month, I will accept the fact that I have to wear my mask all the time.	19
E	Mother of C	I mailed some medical supplies to my daughter abroad and they successfully arrived. I personally think everything is fine once we wear the masks properly. I do not worry about my daughter now because she has enough masks and gloves.	22
F	Unemployed, was fired by his company during the pandemic	I lost my job because my company had to cut off its faculties during COVID-19. I cannot find a job now so I am running out of money. I am using the money I saved for buy a car to pay for my rented apartment. I am very worried about my situation but I have no solution. I am so stressed that I even developed insomnia. I also lost a lot of weight.	34

4. Conclusion

The goal of this research is to identify the common stress sources and the pressure level of the public in the Chinese society as the new measures such as self-isolation and quarantine have affected usual activities, routines, and livelihoods of people that may lead to an increase in loneliness, anxiety, depression, insomnia, harmful alcohol, and drug use, and self-harm or suicidal behavior. [1] Psychologists and mental health professionals speculate that the pandemic is going to impact on the mental health of the population globally with the increase in cases of depression, suicide, and self-harm, apart from other symptoms reported globally due to COVID-19. [3] Thus, it is important to evaluate the current stress level and sources of the Chinese population as China started the battle with the virus before any nations.

Stress is common in daily lives, but excess amount of anxiety may lead to severe mental disorders such as depression, posing threats to one's life. COVID-19 has impacted the public negatively. In my research, only one participant remained in low stress. Five out of six interviewees were identified as at least moderate stress. Although stress level is measured subjectively and can be varied based on different perceived factors, it is strongly recommended to intervene by visiting a professional when feeling extremely stressed for a long time.

Additionally, when the investigation was launched, the epidemic situation in mainland China had improved. Most people's lives gradually returned to a normal state. Thus, most people were more adaptable to this change and under moderate pressure. There had even been cases where the epidemic had brought enjoyable holidays and thus low pressure. However, the economic downfall caused by the epidemic had led to high pressure for those who have lost their jobs. The resumption of work and school from virtual to in-person had also led to high pressure among ordinary workers and students.

References

- [1] Anon, 2021. Mental health and covid-19. World Health Organization. Available at: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/publications-and-technical-guidance/noncommunicable-diseases/mental-health-and-covid-19>.
- [2] Cohen, S., 1994. PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE. MindGarden. Available at: <https://www.mindgarden.com/documents/PerceivedStressScale.pdf>.
- [3] Kumar, A. & Nayar, K.R., 2020. Covid 19 and its mental health consequences. Taylor & Francis. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09638237.2020.1757052>.