

SYMPOSIUM 2: SOCIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY, MENTAL HEALTH, AND COVID-19: FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Organizer: Rochelle Frounfelker, ScD, MPH, MSSW
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec

Background: There is an increase in attention on the mental health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies from around the world highlight that populations have been negatively impacted in terms of mental health by the pandemic, and that specific subgroups based on age, gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status may be differentially affected by COVID-19.

Aims/Objectives/Issues of Focus: This symposium presents research that explores the relationship between sociocultural diversity, mental health, and COVID-19 experiences in the province of Quebec, Canada. We describe an evidence-based collaborative community intervention, Co-vivre, designed to address the needs of vulnerable populations in Montreal, Quebec.

Methods/Proposition: The symposium combines empirical evidence from a large, population-based survey conducted in Quebec, Canada in June 2020 and first-hand experience in the design, implementation, and delivery of a COVID-19 community intervention program.

Results/Potential Outcomes: COVID-19 experiences including exposure to the virus, social distancing, stigma, and discrimination elevate risk of mental distress among certain subpopulations. Interventions that address these issues and use a collaborative community-based approach have the potential to promote the psychosocial wellbeing of vulnerable populations.

Discussion/Implications: We discuss implications for interventions that promote the mental health of socio-culturally diverse populations. Our discussion reflects on the need to acknowledge and address COVID-related experiences of discrimination and stigma and other unintended mental health consequences of public health COVID prevention messages and policies.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify socio-cultural disparities in mental health related to COVID-19 and associated risk and protective factors.
2. Describe challenges and strategies to providing culturally-sensitive mental health services during COVID-19.

References

Pfefferbaum, B. & North, C.S. (2020). Mental health and the COVID-19 pandemic. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 383(6), 510-512. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMp2008017

Holmes, E.A., O'Connor, R.C., Perry, V.H, Tracey, I., Wessely, S...& Bullmore, E. (2020). Multidisciplinary research priorities for the COVID-19 pandemic: A call for action for mental health science. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 7(6), P547-560, DOI:10.1016/S2215-0366(20)3-168-1.

Marroquin, B., Vine, V. & Morgan, R. (2020). Mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: Effects of stay-at-home policies, social distancing behavior, and social resources. *Psychiatry Research*, 293, DOI:10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113419

Hobfoll, S.E. (2012). Conservation of resources and disaster in cultural context: The caravans and passageways for resources. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 75(3), 227-232. DOI: 10.1521/psyc.2012.75.3.227

Latent class analysis of COVID-19 experiences, social distancing, and mental health

Rochelle Frounfelker, ScD, MPH, MSSW
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec

Background: To date, there has been limited investigation into how COVID-related adversities have positively mobilized individuals and collective resources, information that can play a key role in mitigating the collateral damages of the pandemic and in building an individual and collective resilience to this health emergency.

Aims/Objectives/Issues of Focus: The aims of this research are to 1) identify subgroups of people in terms of positive and negative experiences related to social distancing; 2) identify variations in sociodemographic characteristics associated with these subgroups; and 3) identify the association between subgroups and self-reported mental health.

Methods/Proposition: We conduct an on-line survey of COVID-19 and mental health with 3,124 adults residing in Quebec, Canada during the first wave of the epidemic. We use latent class analysis to identify subgroups of people related to positive and negative aspects of social distancing. We use logistic and linear regression to estimate the associations between class membership and self-reported impact of COVID-19 on mental health and scores on the Hopkins Symptom Checklist-10.

Results/Potential Outcomes: We identified five classes of individuals in regards to perceived positives and negatives of social distancing related to COVID-19. Sociodemographic variables including age, gender, race/ethnicity, and self-reported mental health prior to COVID were associated with class assignment. Individuals that were part of a class that reported more negatives of social distancing had poorer mental health as compared to those in other classes.

Discussion/Implications: We discuss study implications for public health programming and interventions to promote the mental health of at-risk populations during the pandemic.

Full List of Authors

Rochelle L. Frounfelker, Zhi Yin Li, Tara Santavicca, Diana Miconi, Cecile Rousseau

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the relationship between COVID-19 public health prevention practices (social distancing) and mental health.
2. Identify at-risk subpopulations and micro to macro level interventions that leverage and build upon the emergence of new resources and adaptive strategies utilized to cope with COVID-19.

References

Galea, S., Merchant, R.M., & Lurie, N. (2020). The mental health consequences of COVID-19 and physical distancing: The need for prevention and early intervention. *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 180(6), 817-818. DOI:10.1001/jamainternmed.2020.1562

Fernandez, R.S., Crivelli, L., Guimet, N.M., Allegri, R.F. & Pedreira, M.E. (2020). Psychological distress associated with COVID-19 quarantine: Latent profile analysis, outcome prediction and mediation analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 277, 75-84. DOI: 10.1016/j.jad.2020.07.133

Ethno-cultural disparities in mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic

Diana Miconi, PhD
McGill University
Montreal, QC

Background: Although social and structural inequalities associated with COVID-19 have been documented since the start of the pandemic, few studies have explored the association between pandemic-specific risk factors and the mental health of minority populations.

Aims/Objectives/Issues of Focus: The present study investigates the association of exposure to the virus, COVID-related discrimination and stigma with mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic in a culturally diverse sample of adults in Quebec (Canada).

Methods/Proposition: A total of 3273 residents of the province of Quebec (49% aged 18-39 yrs, 57% women, 51% belonging to a minority ethno-cultural group) completed an online survey. We used linear logistic regression to identify the relationship between COVID-19 experiences and mental health and the moderating role of ethno-cultural identity.

Results/Potential Outcomes: Exposure to the virus, COVID-related discrimination, and stigma were associated with poorer mental health. Associations with mental health varied across ethno-cultural groups, with exposed and discriminated black participants reporting higher mental distress.

Discussion/Implications: Findings indicate socio-cultural inequalities in mental health related to COVID-19 in the Canadian context. COVID-related risk factors, including exposure, discrimination and stigma, jeopardize mental health. This burden is most noteworthy for the black community. There is an urgent need for public health authorities and health professionals to advocate against the discrimination of racialized minorities and ensure that mental health services are accessible and culturally sensitive during and in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Full List of Authors

Diana Miconi, Zhi Yin Li, Rochelle L. Frounfelker, Tara Santavicca, Jude Mary Cenat, Vivek Venkatesh, Cecile Rousseau

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify socio-cultural inequalities in mental health related to COVID-19 in the Canadian context and COVID-related risk factors
2. Identify COVID-19 responses that are culturally-sensitive and prevent COVID-related discrimination and stigma

References

Cénat JM, Dalexis RD, Kokou-Kpolou CK, Mukunzi JN, Rousseau C. Social inequalities and collateral damages of the COVID-19 pandemic: when basic needs challenge mental health care. *International Journal of Public Health*. 2020:1-2.

Devakumar D, Shannon G, Bhopal SS, Abubakar I. Racism and discrimination in COVID-19 responses. *Lancet*. 2020;395(10231).

From research to action: A collaborative community project to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in ethno-racial communities in Montreal

Cecile Rousseau, MD
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec

Background: High diversity and recent immigration neighborhoods of Montreal have been more exposed to the virus and have suffered from important collateral damages.

Aims/Objectives/Issues of Focus: This presentation will describe a large community intervention project called Co-vivre, designed to address the vulnerabilities of marginalized communities in Montreal identified through research.

Methods/Proposition: Co-vivre is composed of three inter-related components: First, an advocacy and outreach section, focused on improving structural issues (work and SES related and a youth action plan); second, a program of community based psychological first-aid, and; third, a communication campaign to address stigma and discrimination associated with conspiracy theories.

Results/Potential Outcomes: The project is on-going with a qualitative evaluation documenting the process.

Discussion/Implications: We will discuss project challenges, successes, and preliminary lessons learned.

Full List of Authors

Cecile Rousseau

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the processes associated with the formulation and implementation of a large community intervention for COVID-19.
2. Identify the successes, obstacles and challenges of a multi-modal community intervention to mitigate the pandemic effects on ethno-racial communities.

References

Rousseau, C., Jaimes, A., & El-Majzoub, S. (2020). Pandémie et communautés minoritaires marginalisées: vers une approche inclusive en santé publique?. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 1-4. DOI: 10.17269/s41997-020-00422-2

Rousseau, C., & Miconi, D. (2020). Protecting Youth Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Challenging Engagement and Learning Process. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 59(11). DOI: 10.1016/j.jaac.2020.08.007